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*THE CHRONICLE OF
ST. ANTONY OF PADUA.*

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THE CHRONICLE OF ST. ANTONY OF PADUA

"THE ELDEST SON OF ST. FRANCIS"

EDITED BY
HENRY JAMES COLERIDGE
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

NEW EDITION



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 ET · ADJUVET · ME · CONSILIUM · ALTISSIMI
 PER · INFINITAM · SAPIENTIAM · ET · MISERICORDIAM · TUAM
 AMEN.

(Oratio S. Antonii.)



PREFACE.

THE history of St. Antony of Padua has been written by many authors, whose researches have thrown all the light upon it that we can now hope for. There have been, as we are told by Azevedo in his preface, more than a hundred lives of the Saint in different forms. He mentions as particularly worthy of attention three Franciscan authors, Arbusti, a Minor Conventual, Angelico da Vicenza, of the Riformati, and Luigi da Missaglia, of the Observants, as well as the learned Bollandists, and Wadding, the historian of the Order. But Azevedo himself, who wrote late in the last century, has rendered all further comparison of authorities almost superfluous, and his *Life of St. Antony*, whose fellow-countryman he was, may justly claim to be the standard work on the subject. In the following pages he has been followed, except in one or two particulars of minor importance, where his decision seemed grounded on insufficient evidence, as when

he denies that St. Antony visited Mount Alvernia on his way from Rome in his last journey to Padua, on the ground that the Saint was sent to preach wherever the Spirit of God might guide him.

The aim of the present volume, like that of the *Story of St. Stanislaus*, is to give the English reader a clear and flowing account of the life of the great Franciscan preacher without digression or inordinate commentary. The order is that of Azevedo, whose narrative has seldom been quitted, except for the purpose of quoting the beautiful old Franciscan Chronicles. It may be remarked that, after all, St. Antony is hardly known to us in his personal character, and that a great part of what is related of him consists in the anecdotes of his miracles. It was his great aim to be hidden in life, and to a certain extent, he has succeeded in hiding himself. We possess his Sermons, it is feared, not only in a very imperfect form, for he probably never wrote out more than notes of what might be said, but also in a form in which his genuine work, as far as he accomplished it, is overlaid by the arrangement and manipulation of others. It is only after long and careful study that we can arrive at such traces

of individual character as are scattered over the Sermons as we possess them.

It is curious to find it said, as we are assured by his biographers, that St. Antony was less famous for miracles in his lifetime than other saints of the same eminence. It was chiefly as a Saint and a great preacher against heretics that he was known to his contemporaries. His most famous miracles were wrought in defence of the Catholic truth, and had a distinct bearing on his work as a preacher. In the lives which we possess of him, he is, on the other hand, chiefly put before us as a wonder-worker. The difference may be illustrated by a comparison, in the case of our Lord Himself, between the picture given of Him by St. Matthew as the Divine Teacher, and that by St. Mark, in which miraculous power is far more prominent, though we have many beautiful and delicate touches added to our Lord's portrait, in consequence of the loving manner in which St. Peter stored up his personal memories of his Master. In the case of St. Antony, the teaching of the Saint is to most of us nearly a sealed book, though we know its general drift and character, the personal traits which might have been preserved

by a faithful friend and companion have in great measure disappeared, except so far as they can be gathered from a few anecdotes, while the wonders which he worked in confirmation of his teaching have remained.

I can make no apology for the detail in which these miracles are related in the pages which follow. It would be quite natural in a rationalistic or even in a Protestant writer to omit them or slur them over, though, in the case of a writer of the last named class, I conceive that he would be very inconsistent in so treating them, unless he was prepared to sacrifice the miracles of the Gospel in any history of our Lord. Catholic writers have over and over again shown to demonstration that the only logical and reasonable manner of dealing with Christian miracles of any age is to consider them as generally possible and even, in certain cases, probable, and to let single miracles rest upon the same evidences as other facts possible or probable in history. This principle may sometimes be asserted without being acted upon. We may sometimes be too much inclined to put the miracles of the saints in the background, when we do not omit them, or to pass

them over as less important than they are in truth, much as the Gospel miracles are sometimes set aside by writers who still call themselves believers in the supernatural Revelation of which the Gospels are the record. Perfect loyalty to our faith, in the one case as in the other, seems to require that we should make no compromise whatever as to what we believe to be true. One of the great notes of the Church, that of sanctity, has been in all ages providentially attested by the evidence of miracles, among other kinds of evidence, and our Lord's promise as to the continuance of this kind of evidence is plain and indisputable. It is this truth, rather than any remarkable difficulty as to miracles in themselves, which makes their recurrence in the lives of Catholic saints so unpalatable to the world at large, to Protestants no less than to rationalists, though for different reasons. It is a matter of sincere regret to many, who wish well to those among the higher Anglicans who are engaged in fighting the battle against infidelity with so much of earnestness and learning, to see them so ready to consider it as a matter of course that the miracles with which the careers of the Catholic saints are studded are to be

treated as fictions or even as impostures. Unfortunately, their ecclesiastical position requires this concession on their part, but it does not the less involve them in an inconsistency which is fatal to their own arguments against unbelievers. Perhaps, if they find Catholic writers at all inclined to withdraw from the defence of Catholic miracles as matters of history, they may be confirmed in their own implicit sacrifice of evidence on which the truth of Christianity depends in no slight degree.

Again, it can never be truly imprudent to set before Catholics the marvels by which the Christian Apostolate has, in all ages alike, been attested and sanctioned. Their faith may be fed and increased by the knowledge of the wonders which God has worked and is constantly working through the intercession of the saints, while the same faith may be chilled and enfeebled, if these glorious evidences of His Power and Love are in any way set aside from their lawful place.

H. J. C.

London, Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 1875.

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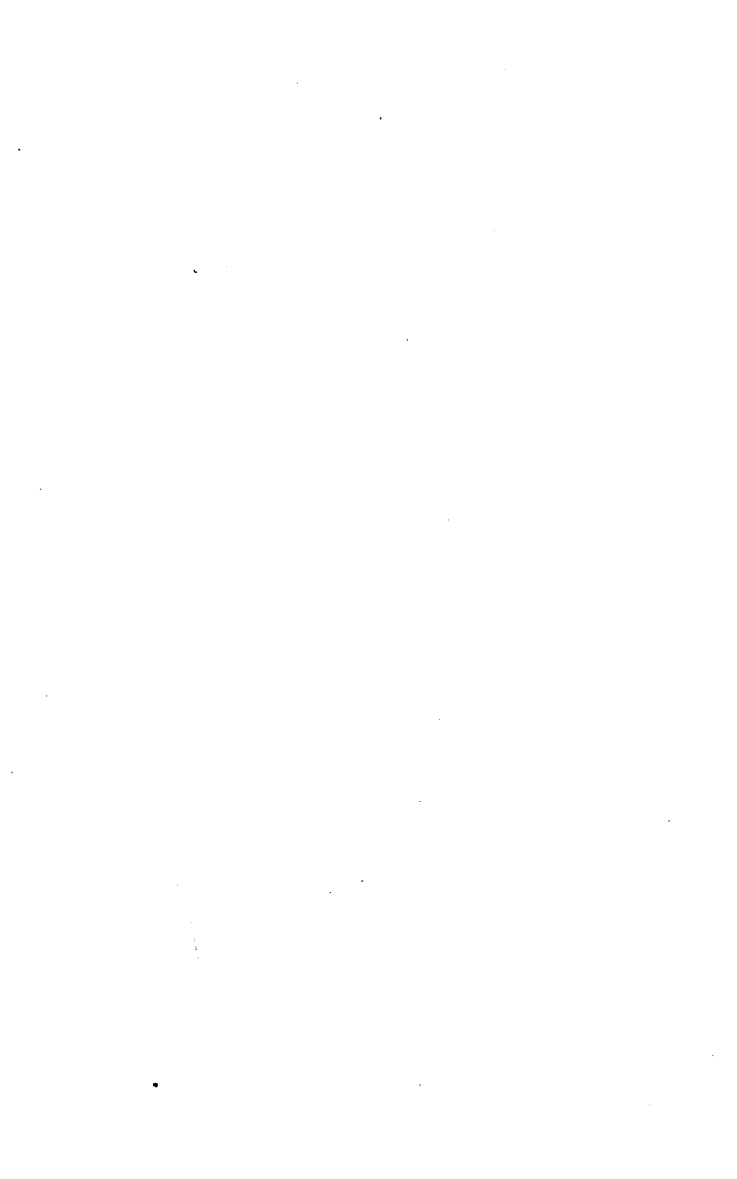
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BOOK THE FIRST.

THE TRAINING OF A GREAT PREACHER.



CHAPTER I.

The Five Friars.

It was on the 16th of January, 1220, twelve years after the foundation of the Franciscan Order, and about six before the death of St. Francis himself, that, to use the words of the old chronicler, Mark of Lisbon, 'he sent the first-fruits of his children to heaven.' They were five friars, whom their holy Father had sent to preach the faith in Morocco, and who were martyred by the hand of the Mahometan king Miramolin himself. They were six originally, four priests and two lay-brothers; but Fra Vitale, who was at their head, fell sick before leaving Spain, and had to be left behind in a town of Aragon. The others went on to Coimbra, where the Portugese Court then resided, and were lodged in the Monastery of Santa Cruz, a house of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. The Friars Minor had a small monastery called Olivarez, or 'Of the Olives,' near Coimbra. The fact that the strangers went to the Augustinian monastery seems explained when we are

told that Queen Urraca's confessor, Don Pedro Nuñez was one of the Canons. As she had a great devotion to the Franciscan Order, he may probably have arranged matters so that she might see them more easily, the Monastery of Olivarez being outside the walls. She is said by some old chroniclers to have had an interview with St. Francis himself when he was in Portugal a few years before this time, and to have had from him the prophecy that the kingdom of Portugal was never to be united to that of Castile. But the best writers throw doubt on the story, and St. Francis does not seem to have reached Coimbra in his short stay in Portugal.

But, whatever may have been the reason on account of which the friars took up their abode in the Augustinian monastery rather than in their own, it is interesting to think that their presence at Santa Cruz brought them into personal intercourse with one who was afterwards to owe to them his own vocation to their Seraphic Order, of which he was to become one of the brightest ornaments on earth and in heaven. A young religious of the monastery then held the office of 'guest-master,' and must have attended to the simple wants of the travellers with all the charity and devotion for which religious houses are so famous. This young guest-master was then known as Hernan or Ferdinand de Bulloens, and

it is his holy and wonderful life which these pages are intended to trace. But we must first continue the story of the five friars on whom he was now waiting.

Queen Urraca, as the Franciscan chronicles tell us 'sent for and most lovingly received the friars, for, indeed, she had their Order in great esteem, and inquired many things concerning their errand, most courteously offering to supply all their wants. Not content with the brief account of their General's intention which they gave her, this lady, thirsting as the hart for the Word of God, engaged them in spiritual discourse, drawing thence much sweetness and consolation; then, taking them apart, she besought them, for the love of Him for Whose sweet Name they were going to torments and to death, to beg of God to reveal to them the day on which she should die. And albeit the friars endeavoured by all means to escape her importunity, saying that they were unworthy to know the secrets of the Lord, and other words of the like import, yet did she at length prevail with them to give her that promise which she craved. And so, after fervent prayer, they again came before the Queen, and bade her be of good courage, for that it was the will of God that her end should be very shortly, and before that of the King her husband. Moreover, they gave her a sure sign, for, "Know lady," they said, "that

before many days we shall die by the sword for the faith of Christ. Praised be His Divine Majesty, Who has chosen us, poor men, to be in the number of His martyrs. Our bodies shall be brought into this city with great devotion by the Christians of Morocco, and you and your husband shall go to meet them. When these things shall come to pass, know that the time is come for you to leave this world and go to God.”

The remainder of the story of the five martyrs must be told in an abridged form, but it ought not to be omitted, as the reader will see, from any life of the Saint to whose history these pages are devoted.

‘On taking leave of the holy men, the good Queen gave them letters to the Infanta, Doña Sancha, daughter of the King of Portugal, then living in a villa called Alenquer, on the banks of the Tagus. She received them most graciously, for indeed she was a lady of exceeding virtue, and such a lover of holy virginity that she had refused every proposal of marriage, and spent her days in prayers and fastings, and much mortification of the flesh. Her chapel was served by priests of the Order of the blessed Father, St. Francis, whom, at her entreaty, he had sent to her. Think, therefore, how gladly she entertained these five, discoursing with them of spiritual things, and providing them with all things needful.

On their departure she furnished them with the dress of seculars, as otherwise they would not have been suffered to enter the country of the Moors, who make more account of their law than of aught beside, nay, even our own merchants, more careful for worldly gain than for souls bought by Christ's precious Blood, would have opposed their entering had the cause of their coming been known.

‘Wherefore they tarried at Alenquer till their hair and beards had grown, and then set forth for Lisbon, whence they took ship for Seville. That city belonged to the Moors; but they found lodging in the house of a rich and noble, and seemingly devout Christian. Here they again put on their religious habits, and nothing doubting the good will of their host, laid open to him their minds with all plainness. But he, to their great discomfiture, took the matter in quite another way, for being in fear of his life, and that of the other Christians, he did his utmost to turn them from their purpose, saying that they would have all their pains for nothing, if indeed they did not run a risk of losing their own faith by reason of those torments which they would have to suffer.

‘Now, when the friars heard him speak in this strain, they made all haste to depart, and like stout and valiant soldiers marched forth to attack the enemy in his stronghold, namely the Moorish

mosque: there, finding their foes, so to speak, fully armed, praying to their prophet, they struck at them with that sharp weapon, the Word of God. They, on their part, marvelling at the strange dress of the friars, and taking them for a set of madmen, drove them forth with much violence; but these holy men, nothing daunted thereby, did but encourage one another to greater boldness, saying—"What do we here, so few in number, against such a multitude? Let us rather go straight to the King, and having conquered the head we shall gain an easy victory over the members. Come, let us go joyously to confess before him that dear Lord Who ransomed us with His Blood, and Who is waiting to crown us with the crown of martyrdom." To the palace, therefore, they went: and after much parleying with the guards, who asked whether they were the bearers of any letters or credentials to the King, and who would fain know their business before allowing them to enter, they were at length admitted to the royal presence, and the King inquired who they were, by whom they were sent, and for what intent. To which they made answer, that they were Christians, sent by the King of Kings, Jesus, the Saviour of the world, to preach His holy faith, and that their business with him was to save his miserable soul, which could not be done but by his forsaking Mahomet and believing

in Christ, and receiving baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity.

‘ But the Moorish King, who looked to hear something of quite another sort, broke out into a rage at hearing his prophet blasphemed, and asked the saints whether they came to preach only to him, or to his people also. “ O King,” they said, “ we come first to thee as the head of this accursed sect, that being led into the way of truth, thou mayest teach it to thy people, and be to them the means of salvation, as thou now art of their perdition.” At which words the King becoming more and more inflamed with fury, exclaimed—“ O wretched and accursed men, doubtless you have been sent here for your many and great sins, for which you shall suffer the extremity of punishment, unless you desist from your rash enterprise, and embrace the faith of our great prophet, for then will I not only pardon you, but bring you to great riches and honour, that all may know how we reverence him, and favour them who forsake other laws for his: but otherwise ye shall expiate your madness by divers torments and certain death.” But the saints made answer that the law of Mahomet was an accursed law, which would condemn its followers to eternal death, in which all their honours and treasures would perish with them; while, on the other hand, by being poor and despised for a very short

time in this world, they would gain indestructible treasure in the next ; and they adjured the King to think on this everlasting reward, for that if he so highly esteemed his earthly kingdom, much more ought he to prize the heavenly realm ; and besought him to turn to the true God, Who had sent them as His messengers to deliver him from that dread doom which else must be his portion. But the King, not waiting to hear more, gave orders that they should be driven from his presence, and beheaded immediately.

‘ Full of gladness at this sentence, the friars spoke one to another, saying—“ O happy we, that now see the day we have long desired and the thing we have so long prayed for is granted to us : well is it with us, for we are already in port ; let us buckle on our armour, and bravely endure that sharp short conflict which awaits us. Soon we shall be beyond the storms of this life, and the temptations of the devil, and the siren songs of the flesh ; then will men have no more power over our frail bodies, but we shall go to our home in heaven to see Him Who is our first beginning, and to receive a hundred-fold for the sufferings we have borne for His sake. Let us thank and praise Him with merry hearts, and gladly present to Him the lives which He bought by His death.” With these and other like words they

comforted each other, and hastened to the place where they were to die with such eagerness that the executioner, believing them to be mad, sought to turn them from their folly, as he deemed it, and to accept the offers of his sovereign's clemency. But they told him that it would be real madness to prefer the perishable goods of this world to the joys of eternity, and that this life was but a breath in comparison of the next.

‘Now, while all this was going on, the prince, who was present when his father gave that sentence, besought him not to act rashly in the heat of passion, but rather to strive to compass the conversion of those miserable men by means of his own sages, and so to get great glory for himself; which counsel pleased the King well, and he sent to revoke the sentence, and to give orders to imprison the men in a certain tower.

‘On hearing this, the holy men endured another sort of martyrdom in their spirits, fearing that God on account of some grave imperfection in them, would not give them that crown which they aspired to; notwithstanding, they committed their cause to Him, and in obedience to the command which they had received to preach the Faith, they began to do so from the battlements of the tower to the Moors who passed by, which thing coming to the ears of the King, he

had them removed to a subterranean prison, where they spent five days praying and preaching to their fellow-prisoners; after which they were again brought before the King, who, as before, reviled them as madmen, and once more bade them choose between torture and death and the greatest honours of his kingdom. The holy martyrs replied that, as they had already told him, they cared no whit for all his treasures; and that as for the death with which he sought to affright them, it would be to them a most welcome messenger to bring them into His presence Whom they so greatly longed for, that every hour seemed a thousand years while they were parted from Him. And as they went on to speak of the endless pains of hell which await those who reject the true God and obstinately persist in serving that false prophet, and of our Lord's huge mercy in tarrying so long for the King's conversion and sending His servants to show him the way of salvation, he began to feel the power of the Holy Spirit in his soul, in some measure, for albeit he drove them from his presence, and had them led back to their dungeon, yet did he take counsel with his Ministers how he should deal with those men, and they, moved in like manner by the words they had heard, persuaded the King not to shed the blood of those madmen, but to send them away to some country of the Christians

and as it so chanced that a ship was even then about to sail to Morocco, where were many Christians, the King lent an ear to their counsel and gave order that so it should be.

‘The saints, therefore, were conducted to Morocco by a certain Spanish cavalier, Don Fernando de Castro, who had taken service in the Court of Miramolin, the King of that country, on account of certain differences between him and the King of Portugal, and were by him introduced into the palace of the Infant, Don Pedro, brother of the said King, who, for reasons of a like sort, had taken up his abode in Morocco. He greatly marvelled at seeing these men, so pale of visage, and so worn that they were like walking skeletons, with hollow eyes, and backs bowed with fatigue and suffering, and yet withal with so gracious and sweet an aspect, and so bright a gaiety shining in their faces, that they were more like angels than men. Outwardly, indeed, they were half dead, but interiorly so inflamed with the divine charity and the love of their neighbour, that they made a jest of death—nay, rather they regarded it as a thing most precious and desirable. The Infant, having well considered all this, as also the great pains these men had taken to gain the crown of martyrdom in Seville, and fearing the confusion that would ensue if they should now do the like, strove with many and

seemingly fair arguments to turn them from their purpose. But they, answering never a word, left his palace, and went forth into the streets inquiring the way to that of the King Miramolin, and being told that he was not then in the city, but would shortly return, they stood on a rising ground near which he should pass by, and so soon as they saw him, one of their number began in a loud voice to preach the Catholic faith and to condemn the sect of Mahomet. The King, astounded at so much boldness in a man of such mean garb and aspect, commanded that they should be driven outside the gates towards those parts inhabited by the Christians; and the Infant himself sent two of his followers to accompany them to Ceuta, whence they might take ship for Portugal. But those servants of God, without paying any heed to them, turned back, and boldly preached our holy faith in the square of the city, till they were seized by the King's guards and thrown into prison, where for twenty days they lived without meat or drink, being sustained by the mere grace of God.'

The chronicle goes on to relate the wonders which followed. A pestilence broke out, and the inhabitants besought the King to release the 'barefooted prisoners,' and on doing so he found to his surprize that like the holy children at Babylon, they had gained in flesh and appearance from their confinement.

They were committed to the care of some Christians, and sent to Ceuta: but they escaped from their guards, and began to preach in the streets. Then there came an invasion of Arabs from the desert, and the force which was sent against them might have perished for want of water, but that Brother Bernard 'dug a little hollow in the ground with a stick, when immediately there gushed forth so plentiful a fountain that all the army, together with their horses and camels, had enough to slake their thirst, and likewise there was a supply to take for the march.' The friars, however, were again sent to Ceuta, and again escaped, as the Christians were afraid to put violence upon them, so they were committed to the care of a Mahometan officer, from whom, however, they managed once more to escape. They were then taken before a judge, and severely threatened and tortured. 'In the end they were thrown into prison, more than half dead, and there they spent the night in thanking God, and encouraging each other to suffer bravely for His sake. And that good and gracious God, looking down from heaven upon His dear servants, was pleased to console them by His divine presence, and to appear to them in a radiant light, filling their souls with such sweetness, that all their sufferings were forgotten as though they had never been. This bright light was seen by the

guards with an appearance of many shadows of persons moving in it, so that they suspected that in some way the saints had been conveyed out of prison, and going with all speed to a certain good Christian named Pedro Hernando, who was also a prisoner, they told him how they had seen the holy men rising towards heaven in a glory of light ; but he, understanding it to be some vision, bade them fear nothing, for that He had heard them singing praises to God all night. And they, hastening to the prison, found them there, as full of joy and contentment as though nothing had befallen them.

‘ Now, when the King knew all these things, he doubted with himself whether he should endeavour to turn the saints to his false faith, or should condemn them to death. But the Infant, foreseeing what the end would be, sent at once to the Governor, praying him to let their bodies be given to the Christians for burial, and not abandoned to the fury of the Moors, which thing he promised. Meanwhile, the friars were taken before the King, who thus accosted them—“ Now that you are here before me, choose whether you will die as my enemies, or live as my chosen and honoured friends.” They with great serenity made answer, that none could doubt them, to be already his friends, seeing that they had come from a far country, with their lives in their hands, for

love of his soul and the souls of his people. But he turned away, filled with fury, and betook himself to his private chamber, there to take counsel with himself how to deal with these men, over whom neither fair nor harsh words had any power. While they, praising God for the grace He had given them to remain hitherto unshaken in constancy, began to preach in that very audience chamber to all those present, without heeding the blows and buffets which the infidels ceased not to give them.

‘One of the bystanders was a Moorish knight, very much in the King’s favour, who, desiring to prove whether by gentle speech he might prevail with the servants of God, adjured them to listen to his lord, who, notwithstanding he had endured so many insults from them, and so many blasphemies which they had spoken against the great prophet, yet was willing to spare their lives. This blind infidel greatly extolled that arch-deceiver, saying that his holy law had been given to him by God Himself, and that by his intercession they would gain great glory in heaven, if only they would consent to embrace his faith. Now, Brother Otho, not enduring to hear more, exclaimed with a holy indignation—‘Avaunt, Satan; and know that we are worshippers of the true God alone. Think of thy own miserable soul, which will be lost eternally unless thou leavest this

accursed way; and trouble not thyself for us, who have chosen a sure and certain road to heaven." Saying this he spat twice on the ground in token of his abhorrence of Mahomet and his sect, and the Moor, not daring to draw his sword, because to use arms in the royal palace was as much as a man's life was worth, struck Brother Otho on the cheek, saying—"Take that; and learn another time to keep silence." Then that true disciple of Jesus said, "God pardon thee, my brother," and offered him the other cheek, saying that he was ready to suffer all things for the love of God; at which new sort of vengeance all present marvelled much as at a thing wholly unknown indeed to the world, and only practised by God's faithful servants.'

A last effort was made, the King offering them some beautiful damsels as wives, and promising to give with them large dowers if they would embrace the false creed of Mahomet. On their refusal, he determined to put them to death with his own hand. They were led into the public square, and there he, 'arming himself with a huge scimitar, clove all the five, one after another, from the crown to the chin, and afterwards struck off their heads, taking withal a devilish joy in seeing the great streams of blood which flowed from the bodies of the martyrs, each of whom received his death-stroke kneeling and

praying for his murderer; and so they gave their souls to God, in the year of our Lord, 1220, and the third of the Pontificate of Pope Honorius the Third, on the 16th day of January, not quite seven years before the death of the glorious father, St. Francis; and they were the first-fruits of his order that he sent to heaven.

‘At that very hour, as the Infanta Doña Sancha was fervently praying in her chamber, they appeared to her bright and shining as the sun, bearing in their hands a scimitar in token of triumph, and thus they spoke to her—“O faithful handmaid of the Most-High, it has pleased Him, in recompense of those good words with which thou didst encourage us, and speed us forth to win our crowns, to permit us to visit thee in that guise in which we gained them, and to promise to be thy advocates in heaven.” And having said this they vanished, leaving the Infanta greatly comforted. Afterwards she built a church in that same place where she had had this vision, that God might be ever honoured in His saints.’

Notwithstanding all the attempts of the infidels to dishonour the relics, and finally to burn them, they were unable either to destroy them or to keep them from the Christians. ‘There broke forth such a terrible storm of wind and hail with most vivid lightnings that they fled to their homes in far greater

fear than the Christians had done before; and so the faithful were able to collect the holy relics by the light of those flashes, and to carry them to the Infant, for they dared not keep them in their own houses. Even some few small portions which they had overlooked were recovered; for the Moors, whose greed of gain is equal to their cruelty, themselves brought them to the Christians, who bought them of them.

‘The Infant had prepared very costly vessels for the reception of the relics, but, first of all, it was necessary to dry them, so that they might be conveyed to Portugal, and with this intent he confided them to John Ruberto, a Canon of Santa Cruz at Coimbra, his chaplain and confessor, and a very devout religious, and to three very innocent and virtuous young pages of his, who were to assist in the work. These youths were not allowed to leave the house during this time, lest by so much as a thought they should profane the sanctity of the relics,

‘Now when the relics were sufficiently prepared, and reverently placed by the Infant in two magnificent caskets, most richly adorned with silver and gold, he many times asked the King’s leave to depart, but in vain, for not only did he refuse him permission, but listened to the counsel of the Moors to kill him and all the Christians in his dominions, and he continued

stubborn for sometime, till it pleased God miraculously to soften his heart, so that he sent for the Infant, and told him that he was free to go whithersoever he listed. He therefore caused a mule to be laden with the caskets, and straightway began his journey with all his followers, misdoubting lest the King might change his mind, and for this reason he travelled in such haste, that having left all the usual places of refreshment far behind, he was forced to pass the night in an uninhabited place called Arozza, which was so infested by lions that all those who saw them pass that way made sure that that night would be their last. The Infant was not ignorant of the reputation of the place, but he had such faith in the relics of which he was in charge, that as soon as the roars of the savage beasts were heard approaching, he gave orders that the caskets should be laid in the way by which the lions must come, and no sooner were they within sight of these sacred relics than they fled swiftly from the place, and were never again known to appear there.

‘Meanwhile, King Miramolin, having heard that the relics were taken away, sent a troop of light horsemen in pursuit of the Infant. And now two wonderful things came to pass. First the Infant by the inspiration of God, did as they of old had done when they left the oxen bearing the ark of the

covenant to choose their own way; and the mule, thus left to itself, turned out of the straight road, and miraculously choosing a steep mountain path, baffled the pursuers. But this was not all; for when they, riding very swiftly, reached another road, where they were both seen and heard by the Christians, God, by His divine omnipotence, so blinded them that they were utterly unable to find the path which led straight to those they sought. And so, filled with a great confusion and astonishment, the Moors turned back, having, against their will, been made to manifest the glory of the saints of God and of God in His saints. As for the Infant and his men, they, praising the goodness of the Lord, arrived safely at Ceuta, where they were received with great joy and gladness. Here he embarked on board a ship which he had in readiness, and sailed for Seville. Now, in the night, which was very dark and starless, they were on the point of striking on a rock, and would doubtless have perished but for the help which God granted them by the merits of those precious relics, for just as the danger was imminent, so brilliant a light suddenly shone in the sky as showed them the rock, and so they escaped the peril.

‘Meanwhile, a messenger had come to the King of Seville, charging him to send the Infant prisoner to Morocco, and to put all his followers to death, which

news reaching him before he arrived at Seville, he, instead of landing there, continued his course towards Galicia, and thence travelled to the kingdom of Leon, where reigned his cousin Alfonso, who had left Portugal for the reasons before mentioned. Here he went to the house of a friend of his in the city of Astorga, who for thirty years had been afflicted with a grievous sickness, and deprived of the use of his limbs, whom he besought to address himself with confidence to those holy relics of which he was the bearer, telling him the wonders that God had wrought by their means. And this poor man, not being able to say a word (for his sickness had taken from him the power of speech), knelt down and prayed in his heart with such a lively faith, that he was, in that instant, healed of all his infirmities. As he was not able himself to go to Portugal, the Infant sent the relics to Coimbra in charge of a good and noble knight, named Alfonso Perez de Acuña, and several others. King Alfonso, with his wife, Doña Urraca, sent a messenger to meet them and desire them to wait, for that he, with all the clergy and nobility, intended going forth to meet the holy relics with all suitable reverence and solemnity; which when they had done, they followed the mule which bore them, and which was still left to take its own way, to the Monastery of Santa Cruz, at the

gate of which it stopped and refused to stir till it was opened. No sooner was this done, than the mule walked straight to the high altar, before which it knelt down, waiting till the relics should be taken from its back. Now the King's design had been to deposit the relics in the principal church of the city, but seeing in this a sure token that it was the will of God that they should rather abide in that monastery, he had a very superb chapel erected, with a shrine, in which nearly all the relics were laid: what remained were sent, part to a Franciscan monastery, and part to a convent, of which the Infanta, his sister, was abbess.'

CHAPTER II.

*Ferdinand Martin de Bulloens.*¹

IT is now time to return to the young religious priest, as he seems at this time to have been, who has been already mentioned as waiting upon the five holy Franciscan martyrs in the monastery of Santa Cruz. Ferdinand de Bulloens was born in 1195, on the 15th of August, the feast of our Lady's Assumption. His parents, Martin de Bulloens and Maria Teresa Tavera, were both persons of distinction, and the latter traced her descent from a sovereign of the ancient kingdom of Asturias in the eighth century. His Father's family was of Flemish origin, the same to which belonged the great Godfrey of Bouillon, and their name was derived from the castle of Bouillon, on the confines of France and Flanders. They had not been settled in Portugal quite fifty years at the time of our saint's birth. His grandfather, Vincent Martin de Bulloens, was one

¹ The name is so written in the Spanish Chronicle of St. Francis. Buglioni, the form used by Azevedo, seems to be an Italian version of the name.

of several noble knights who were detained on their way to the Holy Land in the Crusade under William 'Longsword,' by the entreaties of King Alfonso I., who begged their assistance in regaining his capital, Lisbon, from the hands of the Saracens, who held it in possession. The Christian fleet was persuaded by the King to enter the Tagus, and the whole army landed to aid in the siege. It cost them five months' delay, from May to October, when the city at last fell. The number of the besiegers slain was of course much greater than that of those lost on the other side, and two churches were built—one by the King and the other by the Crusaders—in memory of their lost comrades in arms. As those who fell in such wars were considered martyrs, the church which was built by the strangers was dedicated to our Lady of Martyrs, and the name meets us more than once in later history. The famous Archbishop of Braga, Bartholomew de Martyribus, was baptized in this church, and took his surname from it. Many of the strangers settled in Lisbon. King Alfonso offered large rewards of land and booty to all who would accept them. The greater number, however, proceeded on their way to Palestine. Ferdinand de Bulloens' grandfather was one of those who stayed. He was invested with the dignity of Governor of Lisbon.

From his birth Ferdinand seems to have been a favourite child of Mary. Born on the Feast of her Assumption, he was baptized in the Cathedral of Lisbon, which was dedicated to the same mystery, and which was immediately facing his father's house. We are told that his mother was in the constant habit of directing his attention to it while quite an infant, and that he never failed to show the greatest delight when she did so. He received the name of Ferdinand, after his uncle, a very pious priest, who was one of the Canons of the Cathedral, and the font in which he was baptized was long preserved and held in veneration. It is also said that the door through which he was brought into the Cathedral was only opened on his feast, and that it was necessary to protect it by a wooden hoarding from the ill-judged piety of the Faithful who would otherwise have destroyed it for the sake of having pieces to keep as relics. On the site of Martin de Bulloens' house was built a small but beautiful church, which was restored after the great earthquake of 1755. A wonderful circumstance happened at that time. The church caught fire, but the antependium of the altar of the saint was uninjured. This was not all. On clearing away the ruins of the church, some time after, a youth was found buried among them, but perfectly well and strong,

and, on being questioned, he said that a Franciscan friar had brought him food, and cheered and consoled him, all the time he was there.

The little Ferdinand showed signs of his future sanctity from his earliest years. He was docile and affectionate, full of compassion for the poor, and of attachment to all the offices of the church, above all to the Holy Mass, which he never failed to hear every day. It is said that at the age of five he was moved, by his devotion to our Lady, to make a vow of perpetual virginity, and that from that time he desired to consecrate himself wholly to God.

In those ages of faith it was not uncommon for parents to dedicate their sons, for a certain number of years, to the special service of God in the Church, and Ferdinand's pious parents were not slow in satisfying their own devotion and the holy inclinations of the child in this way. They placed him—some say at the age of ten, but from the way he is mentioned at this time by some old authors, it seems likely that he was still younger—with the clerics of the Cathedral, where he was soon distinguished for his studious and pious habits. It seems beyond a doubt that the priest to whose care Ferdinand was confided was the uncle whose name he bore; for although it is only said by old authors that he was intrusted to a pious priest attached to

the Cathedral, yet, as his uncle is always called "Master Ferdinand" in contemporary writings, and as there certainly was one of the canons who bore the title of Master of the scholars, it seems reasonable to suppose that this was Ferdinand de Bulloens.

The first miracle connected with the future saint is said to have been wrought whilst he was with the canons of Lisbon Cathedral, and although the Bollandists consider the tradition doubtful, it is very general in Portugal, and is mentioned by several authors of the time. The story is that Ferdinand drove away the devil, who appeared to him one day in the form of a dog, by making the sign of the Cross on a piece of marble, which ever after retained the impression. The stone is on the staircase leading to the choir, and is greatly venerated by the people.

At the age of fifteen Ferdinand determined to retire altogether from the world, and for this object he made choice of the Monastery of St. Vincent without the walls, a house of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, of the Congregation founded in the preceding century by St. Theotonio at Santa Cruz at Coimbra. He had no difficulty in following his vocation; his pious parents willingly offered to God the son whom they already regarded with veneration as a soul specially chosen by Him, and the canons received him with

open arms. His first trouble arose from finding that the time which he desired to devote altogether to the things of God was broken in upon by the frequent visits of his parents and relations; and a far more vexatious disturbance was caused by those of worldly friends and acquaintances, who were continually trying to induce him to quit the religious life for the career of distinction and splendour which awaited him in the world.

Such attacks, as may well be believed, fell harmless on the young soldier's armour of proof; it was the fear of being involved in earthly occupations and amusements which had led him to a life of retirement, and the more he heard of pleasures and riches the more enamoured he became of the purity of Mary and the poverty of Jesus. But he felt that while he was so near Lisbon these disturbing influences would be at work, and that till they ceased he could not be wholly occupied with God; he therefore requested the Prior of St. Vincent to send him to the Monastery of Santa Cruz at Coimbra. This Prior was a very holy man, Don Gonzalo Mendez, whose soul was seen after his death ascending to heaven by Fra Egidio, a saintly Dominican, whilst he was saying Mass at Santarem, at a long distance from Lisbon. He was much grieved at losing the young brother, who had much endeared himself to all the community

during the two years he had passed at St. Vincent, but the reasons he gave were so just and solid that the Prior granted his request.

Two miraculous occurrences are related of Ferdinand during his residence at Santa Cruz. He was nursing one of the religious, who was seriously ill, and whilst praying for his recovery it was revealed to him by God that the sickness was produced by the agency of the devil. Ferdinand immediately laid the end of his habit over the sufferer, and he was cured in an instant. The other miracle may have been the reward of the humility which caused him to rejoice when any particularly mean and unpleasant office was allotted to him. He was occupied in an employment of this sort when the Elevation bell struck his ear, and as he prostrated himself in adoration the walls of the room he was in parted before his eyes and showed him the altar and the priest and the Sacred Host.

Eight years passed, all given by Ferdinand to obedience, prayer, and the study of the Sacred Scriptures: his memory was remarkably retentive, and he knew by heart the whole of the Bible as well as the most striking passages in the commentaries of the Fathers. It is still more remarkable that he never forgot them, although, partly from illness and partly from his lowly avocations, he never read anything but his breviary

during the first two years after he entered the Order of St. Francis.

The Prior of Santa Cruz, Don John Cesare, as well as Don John and Don Raymond, St. Antony's masters in philosophy and theology, were all distinguished men, so that the opinion recorded of him in a manuscript preserved at Santa Cruz deserves attention. It runs thus: 'Among the Canons Regular of Santa Cruz at that time was the Rev. Father Antony, whose name was Ferdinand Martini, a very learned and pious man, much distinguished in letters, and illustrious by the abundance of his merits.'² This was written in 1222, at the end of the time spent by St. Anthony in the solitude of Montepaolo, and while the light which was to shine so brilliantly in the last years of his life was still hidden and unsuspected.

This testimony makes it clear that the Canons Regular of St. Austin did not undervalue the merit of the religious whom they so generously gave up, as we shall see in the next chapter. The Providence of God was all the time preparing him for his great work in the Church, and although the great power

² 'Erat tunc temporis inter alios Regulares Canonicos S. Crucis, R. P. Antonius, qui Ferdinandus Martini nuncupabatur, vir utique famosus, doctus, et pius, magna literatura ornatus, et gloria meritorum stipatus.' All the Bulloens family were in the habit of adding Martini to their own names.

which he exercised over his contemporaries must no doubt be chiefly set down to the consummate sanctity which was matured under the humiliation and severities which he had to undergo after leaving Coimbra, it cannot be questioned that without the great learning which he had so carefully stored up under the excellent masters afforded him by the Canons Regular he could never have accomplished the work which it was appointed him to do. God was silently preparing His instrument at a distance from the land in which he was to be used for the Church. The discipline of the mind was working together with the discipline of the soul, and the subject of so much Providential care was as yet absolutely ignorant of the task for which he was nevertheless spending so much industry and prayer to make himself ready.

CHAPTER III.

Fra Antonio.

THE date of Ferdinand's ordination to the priesthood is not known, but it certainly took place while he was at Santa Cruz. This is proved by the Franciscan chronicles and the history of the five martyrs of Morocco, which give an account of a vision with which our saint was favoured 'whilst he was celebrating Mass.' He had made his first acquaintance with the Franciscans when some of the friars came from the little convent founded by Queen Urraca to beg alms in Coimbra. On these occasions they visited Santa Cruz, and the sight of their humility and poverty kindled in his heart the first spark of that desire, which burst into flame when the relics of the martyrs reached Coimbra. One of the friars with whom Ferdinand had made friends fell sick and died : and as he was saying Mass, he saw the soul of this Franciscan, at the moment of its departure, pass through Purgatory, in the likeness of a bird in very rapid flight, and thus ascend to heaven. And

in one of the Lessons in the Office of the Saint, recited by the Augustinian Canons in Portugal, it is expressly said that he was a priest when he joined the Order of St. Francis.¹

It was the desire for martyrdom that gave the final impulse to Ferdinand's attraction. He had long yearned for a life of austerer penance than that of Santa Cruz: he had long desired to imitate His Divine Master in the absolute poverty of His Life; and now he was inflamed with an ardent longing to preach His Faith, like those happy five, to those sitting in darkness, and, like them, to give Him life for Life. We are told that he went through a time of trial before he resolved on saying all that was in his heart, and that, in his deep humility, he reproached himself with being rash and presumptuous in desiring a happiness of which he sincerely believed himself unworthy. But the struggle came to an end. One day he told his secret to two friars who came to the Monastery, at the same time begging that if he was admitted into their Order he might be sent to preach the Faith in Africa. The friars returned full of glad surprise to tell their Superior of the high-born priest in the rich Monastery of Santa Cruz, who humbly craved admittance among the poor sons of St. Francis. It was granted by the

Ad Franciscanum Ordinem . . . sacerdos factus transiit.

unanimous vote of the whole chapter. The next step was to gain the consent of his Prior: this, too, was given, though he and all the community were full of sorrow. 'Go then, if you will,' said one of them, half in grief and half in anger, 'go, and become a saint.' 'When you hear of my being one,' the young priest answered calmly, 'you will give praise to God.' The words were prophetic, for in less than twelve years from that day he was solemnly canonized by Pope Gregory IX.

Ferdinand received the habit of the Friars Minor before leaving Santa Cruz, which he immediately afterwards left for the lowly little Monastery of the Olives. He then took the name of Antony, out of his great devotion to the holy abbot and anchorite to whom that monastery was dedicated. He was anxious too to escape the importunities of worldly friends by concealing himself under a change of name. The cell which he occupied at the beginning of his novitiate was long regarded with great veneration, and, after a time, converted into a chapel.

In the December of 1220, a few months after entering the Franciscan Order, he received with a joyful heart the obedience he so greatly desired, to go to Africa. It is uncertain whether, by special permission, he was professed before leaving Europe. The Provincial gave him, as a companion, Fra

Filippo, a Spanish lay-brother, who had the same desire for martyrdom as St. Antony,² a desire which it was not the will of God to satisfy in either case; neither was Africa to be the scene of St. Antony's labours. He fell sick of a violent fever immediately after landing, and could not shake it off the whole winter. Accordingly both he and his companion were recalled to their own Province by their Superiors after four months. But Portugal was not the country in which he was to do a great work in a short time for the glory of God and the salvation of men: and the ship in which he sailed was in sight of a Spanish port, when a sudden storm came on and drove her to the coast of Sicily.

Antony was so ill and prostrate from the effects of his long illness, and the voyage, that he was obliged to stay some time at Messina to gain a little strength before travelling to Assisi, where he intended to be present at the General Chapter of the Order which was to be held there at Pentecost, and to enjoy the happiness of seeing its holy Founder. He remained in Sicily till after Easter, and then he and Fra Filippo set out for Assisi.

Antony had felt keenly the disappointment of

² Fra Filippo was present at the death of St. Francis; he died at the age of eighty-seven, in the Monastery of Colombaio, near Monte Alcinò: many miracles were wrought at his tomb.

leaving Africa and losing his hopes of martyrdom ; and although he accepted the will of God uncomplainingly, he resolved to compensate, as far as possible, for the loss he had sustained, by offering Him not only the sacrifice of a life of continual penance, but that of his honour and reputation. He carefully concealed every sign of learning and talent, and gave everybody the idea that he was an ignorant and illiterate person, very much below the average in intelligence and capacity. It was the easier for him to do this, as his humility had led him studiously to hide his gifts while he was in the Monastery of the Olives. The wonder seems to be that his saintly artifice was so completely successful as to deceive St. Francis himself, who was so marvellous a discerner of the conscience, that St. Bonaventure tells us that he possessed the infused gift of reading the souls of his children. But such gifts are only bestowed as St. Paul says, 'in part,' for the purposes for which God intends them to be used. And it was the will of God to veil the lustre of this hidden gem till the time came when He was pleased to reveal it. Thus it was that in this instance He either withheld from St. Francis his wonted illumination, or else He inspired him to cooperate with His designs by concealing the knowledge of the truth which he really possessed.

However this may be, the Portugese friar's reception was what would ordinarily be considered most discouraging and humiliating. St. Francis seemed to take little notice of him. Everybody passed him over, no one would have anything to do with him. He was away from his own Province and Superiors, and they had no knowledge of his presence in Italy, so as to have given any information about him. His companion, though only a lay-brother, easily found a place in the Monastery of Citta di Castello; the business of the Chapter was concluded, every one else was disposed of, one after another left the place of meeting, and Antony was left neglected and almost alone. His sickly and weakened body helped his own humility in making him thus despised. It is said that he had determined to leave the disposal of himself entirely to Providence, and so made no application either to St. Francis or any one else for employment. He would ask for nothing and refuse nothing. Father Gratian, the Provincial of Romagna, happened to notice him. He was looking out for a priest to say Mass at a very small hospice, where six lay-brothers formed the community, and he asked the feeble and ailing stranger whether he were a priest. 'I am,' was the simple reply. Had he as yet any destination? 'No.' Father Gratian on the spot sent him to Montepaolo, a very lonely place near Forli, whither

he at once betook himself, entering on his duties as chaplain with great joy, and devoting himself to a life of extreme silence and penance.

The Superior of the community was a lay-brother. Antony fell at his feet, begging him with tears to employ him in some way which might be a relief to himself and his companions. With great joy he agreed to undertake the washing of the kitchen utensils and sweeping of the house. He was in the habit of spending long hours in prayer and penitential exercises in a sort of cave or grotto, but before taking possession of it he obtained leave of the Superior to request permission for its use of one of the lay-brothers who kept some tools there. This cave became, in fact, his abode during the nine months he spent at Montepaolo, a time devoted to continual prayer, and to fasts and penances equal in severity to any practised by the most mortified solitaries of the desert. It was a time of preparation, in which God was forming and perfecting the future Apostle of His Church. But while his soul was fed and strengthened by this divine intercourse, and illuminated by many wonderful lights, his body, already enfeebled by sickness, became so weak from his prolonged austerities that sometimes he could scarcely stand, and was obliged to be supported when walking.

Old chroniclers of the 'Gesta' of St. Antony are fond of comparing this 'hermitage of Montepaolo' to the cells of the solitaries of the Thebaïd. It was in a wild and mountainous part of Tuscany, about ten miles from Forli. Not a trace exists of the Monastery; but, near the grotto consecrated by the prayers and penances of the Saint, a chapel or oratory was built in 1629, by a Signor Paganelli, in gratitude for a miraculous recovery obtained by St. Antony. Emmanuel Azevedo, the Saint's biographer, who visited the spot, says that half way up the mountain he came upon a spring of the most beautifully clear water, which though it fell into a basin hollowed in the earth, remained perfectly limpid. He adds that it was then the rainy season, and all the other springs of the neighbourhood were thick and muddy. He was assured, not merely by the peasants, but by priests, and other educated persons, that in the most violent storms of wind it is always quite calm and still on 'St. Antony's mountain,' and that this was so well known by travellers, that in tempestuous weather they were always anxious to reach that spot, and enjoy a quiet breathing-space. He was told that three very old poplars formerly grew near the fountain, from which the faithful used to cut pieces to take away with them. Crowds of pilgrims used to visit the oratory, and about two hundred silver *ex votos* still

witnessed to their devotion. A room was still shown in the house of the Corbici family which a well-founded tradition recorded to have been occupied by the Saint when journeying from Montepaolo to Forli; and a copy of the Bible existed which was given by him to the same friendly family. Another interesting memorial was cut down about eighty years ago—a very aged oak outside one of the gates of Forli, under which St. Antony was said to have been in the habit of praying.

CHAPTER IV.

Antony at Forli.

ANTONY spent nine months in the solitude of Montepaolo. But at last the time came when his light was to shine forth. Like the Forerunner of our Lord, he had been 'in the deserts,' where uninterrupted communion with God had 'strengthened him in spirit;' and the Lent of 1222 was to be 'the day of his manifestation.' He was summoned to Forli, where the Provincial, Father Gratian, was about to hold a Chapter of the Order. It was the time of ordinations, and besides priests, there were present some friars in minor orders, who were to be ordained by the Bishop of Forli. There were some Dominican fathers there, perhaps for the ordinations, making themselves companions to the friars of St. Francis out of brotherly kindness and charity.

It seems quite uncertain who were the hosts and who were the guests on the occasion, as the Franciscans had no monastery in Forli for a long time after this date, and, though the Dominicans had a

church and a monastery there in the lifetime of their great founder, these do not seem to have been as yet begun, or at least completed. However, the time came for a spiritual conference, a practice in the Order of St. Francis, and a friendly contest sprang up as to who should address the united body. If the Dominicans were at home, it would be natural for them to insist on the office being discharged by one of the strangers, and if, as is more probable, the Franciscans had received the others in some humble hospice which belonged to them, they would only have been acting on the beautiful courtesy of religious life in begging their visitors to break to them the food of the Word of God. The end of the conflict was that the Superior of the Franciscans turned to Father Antony, and bade him preach on the spur of the moment. It has been thought that he imagined that his Order could lose no credit at the failure of one who was so simple and unlettered ; but we may be allowed to think that the command was not given without some reference in the mind of the Superior to the austere and penitential virtues for which he must have been already known among his brethren.

Antony himself was filled with confusion. He had never preached in his life, though all his life had been, in the Providence of God, a course of training for the highest achievements which lie within the

reach of the greatest preachers in the Church. Not only had he never preached, but he had never opened a book except his breviary since he became a Friar Minor. The Superior was inflexible in rejecting the excuses of the humble priest. Antony said he was a poor ignorant man, who had been fitly employed in washing the dishes in the kitchen. No spiritual person would see in that any disqualification for the highest work in the Church. The Superior told Antony he knew all that he could say, and ordered him to preach out of obedience. The tradition seems too intrinsically probable to be doubted, that the words of the Superior furnished Antony with his text, '*Christ became for us obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.*' He may have intended when he began, to speak a few plain ordinary words on the subject of the season, the obedience of the Son of God for our sakes. His words flowed out like a grand stream which had long been pent up, and was now at last free. The discourse fell into a beautiful order, passages from the Scripture and the Fathers taking their due places in the argument as it proceeded to unfold itself, while every word breathed the most intense feeling and the deepest unction, the language was clear and powerful, the voice sweet and sonorous, every gesture and motion full of grace and simple majesty.

The audience was rapt in astonishment and delight. No one had ever preached so before. They were but few in the little chamber in which the conference was given, but their fewness had not prevented the instantaneous revelation of a holy preacher of the highest grade, the man for whom Italy had long been waiting, who was to have the power to root out the heresies by which the population was already deeply infected, the man on whose lips thousands were to hang, who was to be a burning and shining light to one great multitude after another. There is no power on earth that can be compared on its own line, to the power of eloquence. But the eloquence which thrills the crowds of men in some time of political agitation, which influences or excites the 'madness of the people,' as the Psalmist says, and is so often responsible for evil deeds as well as for the enthusiasm of devoted patriotism, is poor indeed when compared with the higher outbursts of the spiritual eloquence of those to whom God has given the great commission to preach His Word before peoples and nations, and on whom He lavishes the natural and intellectual gifts which are required for their high position, fitting them moreover by special graces and training for its discharge: while at the same time He pours out upon their hearers the graces which enable them to profit in an extra-

ordinary degree by the mighty power which He has intrusted to His servants. The need for the work to which Antony was called had long been heavily felt, and now the time and the man had come by the sweet and powerful agency of God's secret Providence. Everything in the career of the Saint, as far as we have hitherto traced it, had conspired in its degree to produce the result which God had intended from the first. The martyrs of Morocco, the Canons Regular at Coimbra, the storms of the Mediterranean, the sickness in Africa, the accidents which had made Antony unknown at Assisi, his own deep humility, the compassion of Father Gratian, the solitude and humiliations of Montepaolo, and now the inspiration which had guided the Superior at Forli in his chance meeting between a handful of Dominicans and Franciscans—all had brought about the counsel of God, and the Apostle of Italy, the 'Hammer of heretics,' was manifested and recognized as soon as he opened his lips in humble obedience to a man who knew nothing of his gifts.

The manner in which St. Antony was thus manifested, as well as the manifestation itself, must have made the Franciscans feel absolutely at ease as to the will of God with regard to the disposal of the treasure which they had so unexpectedly discovered. Here, they knew, was a man who had most studiously

hidden himself from the applause of men, and had sought to be unknown and despised far more industriously and successfully than most others to be honoured and admired. God Himself had revealed a saint as well as a great preacher. The Provincial of Romagna seems to have been on the spot at the time, and he instantly appointed Antony preacher in his Province. He wrote also to inform St. Francis of what had happened. St. Francis joyfully confirmed the appointment, extending the field within which Antony was to preach to all the Provinces of the Order. The 'hidden life' of our Saint was now over. He never lost his love for retirement, for prayer, for penance and fasting, but he never again was allowed to give himself to them unreservedly. He had a great work to do, and few years of life to do it in, though he still lacked some years of the age of which our Lord and Master had left Nazareth to begin His own Public Life. We may be sure that Antony's heart often reverted with intense longing to that lonely hospice which had been to him somewhat like the lonely peaks of Quarantana to our Lord. And, wherever he went, and however busily he was occupied during the remainder of his life, he was still the humble priest who had been raised so high in spiritual lore in the grotto of Montepaolo.

BOOK THE SECOND.
EIGHT YEARS OF WORK.

CHAPTER I.

The Heretics in Romagna.

It is not unnatural that there should be more spots than one in the city of Forli for which the claim is made that each is the exact scene of the first marvellous sermon of St. Antony. The time was certainly the Lent of 1222; and as it is said that the friars were called to Forli on account of the ordinations, it is probable that the day was at the close of the first week of Lent, though ordinations are sometimes held on the Saturday before Passion Sunday (*Sitientes*), or on Holy Saturday itself. The tradition about the ordinations seems to have given rise to other traditions, as that the Bishop and his Chapter were present at the sermon, and that it was delivered from a pulpit which was long preserved in the cathedral of the city. But as the Bishop of Forli is known to have been a devoted friend of the Friars Minor, it is almost certain that he would hear of the great treasure which they had discovered in Antony, as

soon as the discovery was made, and that he would at once insist on the Saint's preaching in the cathedral. It may therefore be perfectly true that St. Antony frequently occupied the pulpit in question, though it may not have been there that he first manifested the great gifts with which God had endowed him.

The short remainder of his life was full of very great activity, broken by occasional seasons of retirement and study. The Romagna was the first scene of this activity. He spent six months in several of its towns with wonderful success. From Forli he went to Faenza, Imola, Rimini, and Bologna, and adjacent villages and hamlets, gaining, in every place, signal and innumerable victories over heresy and wickedness of every kind, victories which were the fruits of humility and prayer as well as of eloquence. St. Bonaventure quotes the following prayer composed by him, which he used before preaching :

‘O Light of the world, infinite God, Father of eternity, Giver of wisdom and knowledge, and ineffable Dispenser of every spiritual grace, Who knowest all things before they are made, Who makest the darkness and the light, put forth Thy hand and touch my mouth, and make it as a sharp sword to utter eloquently Thy words. Make my tongue, O Lord, as a chosen arrow, to declare faithfully Thy wonders ; put Thy Spirit, O Lord, in my heart that I may per-

ceive, in my soul that I may retain, and in my conscience that I may meditate; do Thou lovingly, holily, mercifully, clemently, and gently inspire me with Thy grace; do Thou teach, guide, and strengthen the comings in and the goings out of my senses and my thoughts, and let Thy discipline instruct me even to the end, and the counsel of the Most High help me through Thine infinite wisdom and mercy. Amen.'

From the very beginning, Antony's preaching was confirmed by miracles; nay, his preaching was itself a wonderful miracle. Whether we suppose him to have preached in Latin or Portuguese, it was nothing short of miraculous that he was understood with perfect ease by the most ignorant audience; and if, as is expressly stated by several authors, he was in the habit of preaching in Italian in Italy, and in French in France, his perfect mastery of these two languages is at least equally marvellous, for he had never learnt the latter in any way, and, with regard to the former, the only knowledge he had of it was from the brief intercourse with six ignorant lay-brothers, which broke in upon the long silence and solitude of Montepaolo. The only explanation is that he had the gift of tongues. We shall find him later on, at Rome, not only perfectly understood by men of different nationalities, but heard by each speaking in his own language, even as were the

Apostles at Pentecost. Moreover, another wonderful circumstance attended St. Antony's preaching, of which we shall by-and-bye find notable instances at Padua and Brescia. This is, that however vast the numbers to whom he was speaking, there was not a single person, however distant from him, to whom his voice did not sound perfectly clear and distinct.

Romagna was, at this period, deeply tainted with the heresy, whose followers are known in history by the names of Waldenses, Albigenses, and Patareni. History tells us enough of the miserable state of the country from the frequent wars and invasions of those times, the factions which set city against city, and parties in the same city against each other, as well as of the corruption of manners, the acts of violence, the domestic feuds, and the unbridled licence and profligacy of the wealthier and more powerful classes. To all these plagues was added the most deadly of all—the plague of a prevalent and insidious heresy. ‘Italy,’ says the old Franciscan chronicle, ‘was all overturned and filled with confusion by all the other nations, who came in to blooden their barbarous swords in her body, invited so to do by the Italians themselves, who called them in to take part in their intestine feuds, and who were all to be in the event their prey, as it turned out. And thus there not only failed among them those

sweet manners which used to make the Italians like to angels on earth, and placed them above all nations in courtesy and charity, but there died away also in them that blessed Faith, for the love of which they had renounced the empire of the world, placing their necks under the most sweet yoke of Christ, and of His Immaculate Holy Roman Catholic Church. And as it happens so often that people take their customs from the company they keep, even the Italians drank of that horrible chalice of Heresy and Abomination, and by means of licence of life, which was then at its highest point, heretics began to multiply in the land.’¹

The historians of the Church speak in the gravest terms of the danger to religion and civilization which existed at the beginning of the thirteenth century, from the prevalence of a heresy which seems to us so strange as that of the Albigenses. ‘In the second and third centuries of the Church,’ says Bishop Héfélé, ‘the question might have been asked which would carry the day, Christianity or the dualism of the Manichæans and Gnostics. A thousand years later, the same question might again have been raised, and the danger which then threatened the Christian Church and civilization was more serious than at the time of the earlier crisis. To find another danger

¹ *Croniche di S. Francesco*, pt. i. l. v. c. 18.

equally terrible, we must refer to the eighth century, when Islamism, established in Spain and on the coast of Africa, threatened to swallow up the whole West. And yet this last peril was really not so great as that of which we are about to treat, and to oppose it there was not only the religious sentiment, but also that of nationality. On the contrary, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the spirit of nationality was most often on the same side with error, in the countries, for instance, in which the debate arose, that is, among the Slavs of the Greek Church, and in the countries in which the conflict became most bitter, that is, in the south of France. In the conflict with the Cathari, there was no longer question of this or that form of Christian dogma, any more than of this or that organization of the Church. The questions were not questions of confessions, such as agitate Europe in our times; but in a word, the battle was fought on the ground of Christianity itself.²

The words which we have quoted were written some years ago, and perhaps the recent manifestations of the spirit of error in Europe may be considered as warranting a more close parallel than is here admitted between the danger to faith in the thirteenth century and that which threatens it in the latter half of the nineteenth. In our own country, as well as on the

² Héfélé, *Hist. des Conciles*. French Translation, t. viii. p. 61.

Continent, the question of the day has passed from the ground of this or that particular doctrine of the Creed to that of the truth of Christianity as a whole. The great definition of the Fourth Lateran Council, which was directed against the heretics of the days of St. Antony, looks as much like a re-affirmation of the ancient Creed, of the doctrine about God, the Trinity in Unity, the Creation, the Incarnation, and the other great truths which are the very essence of Christianity itself, as the first chapter of the Vatican Council. Yet, as the author already quoted says, 'almost every word is directed against the Cathari,' and we may add, almost every word is denied by the 'heretics' of our own time. We need for the present say little more about the doctrines and practices of the Cathari, except that in their principles of dualism, which supposed a good and a bad God, the latter of whom was the author of the material world, their doctrines seem to have been identical with those of the Manichæans so triumphantly vanquished by St. Augustine. The name by which they called themselves 'Cathari,' or the pure, appears to point to a Byzantine origin. These mediæval Puritans professed to imitate the simplicity of primitive times, and, like the German reformers of the sixteenth century, they found much favour in the eyes of princes and nobles who coveted the wealth of the

Church, by inveighing against the degeneracy into which a portion of the clergy had fallen. For a long time this revived Manichæism had been confined to Bulgaria and Hungary, till in the eleventh century it appeared in Southern Germany and rapidly spread its subtle poison over the north of Italy and the south of France, where it so deeply infected the diocese of Albi, that the commonest designation of the heretics became that of Albigenses. Missions had been organized by the Holy See to combat the evil, but it seemed invincible. St. Bernard himself could not conquer it; Innocent III. aided by the Bishop of Osma, and his young acolyte Dominic, seemed on the road to a bloodless victory, when the murder of the Papal Legate by a knight, who thus avenged the excommunication of his master, the Count of Toulouse, kindled the flames of war. Then came the crusades against the Albigenses, and the triumph of St. Dominic, St. Francis, and their sons. Antony was one of the stoutest champions of the truth, and Romagna, the first scene of his apostolic labours, was also the first province healed of the plague. Antony had not preached there three months before he gained the title of the 'Hammer of the heretics.' The fame of his preaching had preceded him to Rimini, where the heresy was more rampant than in any other part of Romagna. No heretic, it was said, could resist

its power, and the teachers of the new doctrines agreed not to listen to him, and persuaded or intimidated the people into promising to follow their example.

Accordingly, the first time that Antony appeared in the pulpit, instead of being listened to by the eager crowds he was accustomed to, almost everybody left the church. The holy preacher, not the least discomposed, addressed the few who remained, and the effect he produced was so great that the heretics declared their cause to be lost if once this man got a hearing, and determined to make away with him. The plot came to Antony's knowledge, and he gave himself up to fasting, prayer, and severe disciplines, which he offered up for the pardon and conversion of his enemies.

When he came from his retirement, he went straight to the shores of the Adriatic, where the river Marecchia falls into the sea, and with a loud voice commanded the fishes to come and hear the word of God, which was despised by men for whom He gave His Son to die. The Saint had been followed by numbers of persons curious to see what he was about to do; and now, hearing this strange invitation, they crowded to the water's edge, some mocking, some, perhaps, half expecting the fishes to obey this preacher, of whom such wonderful tales were told, and all watch-

ing the bright waters of the Adriatic to see what would happen. Then the eye-witnesses declared there was a great stir and movement in the sea and the river, and shoals of every sort of fishes came swimming obediently at the word of Antony, and arranged themselves in surprising order and regularity according to their kinds and sizes, the smallest nearest to the water's edge, and the largest at the greatest distance off, so that the sea glittered all over with their shining scales, as they listened, motionless with lifted heads ; and, says Mark of Lisbon, ' there could be seen no fairer sight.' St. Antony's sermon to the fishes, as recorded by the same chronicler, was as follows :

‘ My brothers, the fishes, who are, as well as we, the creatures of our common Creator, you are much bound to praise your Creator, because from His hand you have received your being and life. And for your home He has given you this noble element of water, fresh or salt, according to the needs of your nature and support, and therein secret places in which to hide ; He has willed it to be clear and transparent, so that you may see what to seek, and what to avoid, He has also given you fins and strength to go whither you will. But most of all you should thank Him because you alone, of all creatures, were saved in the universal deluge, so that you have increased in number beyond all others blessed by God. You

were chosen, that in the belly of one of you the Prophet Jonas should be safe for three days, and then that you should replace him alive on dry land: you paid the tax and tribute for our Lord Jesus Christ, and His chief Apostle, Peter. You were His food, both before He died and after His Resurrection. For these reasons, and many more which do not now occur to me, you are much bound to thank God.'

Meanwhile, the spectators were filled with marvel. The fishes seemed to follow the discourse, to show their satisfaction by the movement of their heads and tails, and to manifest the wish to come nearer to the preacher. The news spread rapidly, and the crowd on the shore continued increasing till there seemed to be as many men and women on land as there were fishes in the sea. Then Antony, thanking God that He was honoured, at least, by His irrational creatures, made the sign of the cross over the fishes, which, as though they had been waiting for that blessing, dived under the water, and disappeared. Then, turning to the multitude, he bade them take to heart the lesson of obedience taught by those dumb creatures; and going on to speak of the malice of sin, and of heresy in particular, God so blessed his words that there was hardly one present that was not converted.

The readers of the life of St. Francis, and all who are acquainted with the beautiful and simple spirit in which he was accustomed to consider all the creatures of God, animate or inanimate, as his brothers and sisters who had come from the hands of the great Father of all, will not be surprized to find the Saint who was called his 'eldest son,' addressing himself in this quaint and picturesque manner to the lower order of God's creatures when the Word of God was despised and shunned by the heretics. The miracle of the fishes is in this sense parallel to the miracle of St. Francis himself who preached to the birds at Bevagna. There is, however, another aspect of the miracle of the fishes, as also of that which will be presently related, which we know as the miracle of Bonvillo, to notice which may not be derogatory to the beautiful simplicity of the incidents in themselves. This sermon of St. Antony to the fishes, which seems at first sight a simple expansion of the words of the Three Children :

*Benedicite cete et omnia quæ moventur in aquis Domino,
Benedicite volucres cœli Domino ;*

was also a refutation of one of the falsehoods of the Albigenian sect, by whom the Unity of the God-head, and the Christian doctrine of the Creation of all things by God, and of His government over all the world, were denied, very much as they are denied

by the anti-Christian teachers of our own time. To whatever extent the witnesses of this miracle recognized in it the working of a power more than human and natural, to the same extent was it to them a proof of the Christian truth as taught by His Church and denied by the heretics, that the God Whose faith Antony preached was the God of all creation. The common people who had been seduced by the heretics probably did not know very much of the tenets of the sect. They were attracted by a show of severity of manners in the teachers, by the organization of the sect, which in many respects parodied that of the Catholic Church, while at the same time the licence permitted to the mass of the followers of the false religion was very convenient for men and women who wished to lead a life of pleasure and worldliness, without the restraints imposed by the Catholic Church and the necessity of approaching the sacraments. The practical teaching of the Cathari as to the indulgence which may safely be allowed to human passions was by no means ambiguous, and it was this practical teaching which made them so popular, just as in our time the shallowest and most frivolous of cavillers against the truth of the Scripture narrative of Creation or the authenticity of the Gospels are welcomed as prophets by so many who are above all things desirous to

persuade themselves that they may violate with safety the laws of morality and disobey their own conscience. The practical result of the teaching was as easily and infallibly divined by the mass of men in the case of the Cathari as in that of the Apostles of modern enlightenment. The common people, therefore, would only see in this miracle, and in that which we shall immediately relate, an exercise of miraculous power attesting the sanctity of Antony and the authority of his preaching. But if there were any present, in either case, who held intelligently the doctrine of the Cathari about God and His creatures, they would have seen in both miracles the confutation of those particular errors on which we have remarked.

CHAPTER II.

The conversion of Bonvillo.

THIS 'sermon to the fishes' is the first famous miracle recorded of St. Antony. It was noticed that in this, as in other cases, when the object was to confirm Catholic truth, he worked his miracles publicly, but that when they were wrought out of charity, for the help of some particular person, he was careful to avoid all notice, and was in the habit of attributing them to the faith of the person benefited, or to the prayers which some one had been offering, to anything, in short, rather than to merits of his own.

The conversion of nearly all the inhabitants of Rimini soon followed: but there were a few inveterate heretics who held out still. One of these was a man named Bonvillo, who obstinately refused to be convinced, and who was in the habit of saying that all these people had been converted by the sight of four or five fishes accidentally remaining motionless near the shore. Antony had more than once endeavoured to conquer this heretic's determined refusal.

to believe in our Divine Lord's presence in the Sacred Host. 'You get the better of me in words,' he said, 'because you are more learned than I am, but let us come to proofs: I promise to believe what you say if you will show me some miracle worked by this Sacrament of yours.' The Saint, by divine inspiration, replied that, trusting in God, he accepted the challenge. The audacious heretic went on to say that he would give his mule no food for three days, and that on the fourth he would be in the square of the city bringing some oats for the animal. Antony was to come to meet them with the Blessed Sacrament, and if the animal left the oats to adore It, 'then,' said Bonvillo, 'I will believe as you do.'

On the appointed day, after saying Mass, Antony, followed by his religious brethren and all the principal persons of the city carrying lighted candles, came into the square, bearing the Blessed Sacrament. Bonvillo was standing there with the mule, which was walking restlessly round and round his master, smelling at the oats which he had with him. No sooner had Antony come close to them, than the man threw the oats in a heap before the mule, which, notwithstanding, as soon as Antony commanded it, in the Name of the God Who was hidden in the Sacred Host, to come and adore Him, recognized the presence of its Creator, and approached with

bent head, and knelt down, continuing in that attitude of adoration till the Blessed Sacrament was carried back into the church. Bonvillo immediately abjured his heresy, and lived and died penitent.

These two wonderful miracles were the cause of innumerable conversions. Such heretics as remained obstinate, were, however, as is always the case, only the more bitter in their hatred of the truth in consequence of the wonders by which it was attested. So it was with the Jews who could not deny our Lord's miracles, yet were not converted by them: so it is with the enemies of His Church. These heretics of Rimini invited Antony to a dinner, at which it was determined to poison him. He accepted the invitation, thinking it a good opportunity for trying to win them back to God. As he sat down to table, the designs of his entertainers were revealed to him, and he gently reproved them for their perfidy. On this, they shamelessly replied that if he were a true preacher of the Gospel he ought not to be afraid to eat poisoned food, as Christ had expressly promised that his faithful disciples should not be hurt by any such thing. They had no idea, they added, of harming him, but only of bringing honour to him by the miracle which would no doubt be wrought in his favour. Antony asked them, whether, if this were so, they would promise to submit to the

Catholic Church, and when they answered that they would, he committed himself fervently to God, made the sign of the Cross over the poisoned meats, and ate them without any ill effects. After this, the most stubborn could hold out no longer ; and it was commonly said that Antony found Rimini heretical, and left it Catholic.

Antony's labours in Romagna were interrupted for a short time by his going to study ascetical theology at Vercelli. Some writers consider that he was sent there by St. Francis as a trial, but it seems certain that he was moved to this step by his own deep humility inspiring him with the wish to show himself, to those who regarded him as a learned theologian in the character of a lowly scholar who required the instruction of a master. St. Francis consented to his request : so rare a love of humiliation was after his own heart, and he gladly embraced the opportunity of setting so bright an example before his children. That this was the case seems proved by the short time he left Antony at Vercelli—far too short for acquiring proficiency in a subject of which he was before ignorant.

The master under whom Antony placed himself was a very distinguished person, Thomas, Canon Regular of the Congregation of St. Victor at Paris, from which city he was sent to the newly-built Abbey

of St. Andrew at Vercelli, which had been erected principally by money given by Henry III., the young King of England, in expiation of his grandfather's guilt in the murder of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and of which Thomas died Abbot in 1246. Antony was far more anxious to pass for an ignorant and unlearned person than he was to make great progress under his master. But he had here a harder task than at Montepaolo, and Thomas was not deceived by the humility of his scholar, who soon surpassed all his fellow-students, including Adam de Marisco, an Englishman, who had hitherto distanced all the others in the race. This is Thomas's testimony: 'I know Brother Antony, of the Order of Friars Minor, very intimately; he was not possessed of very great human science, but most rich in purity of soul, and mental goodwill: he desired to learn mystical theology, and his acquirements in it were very great. Indeed I may say of him what is written of St. John the Baptist: "he was a burning and a shining light:" interiorly burning with the love of God, and shining exteriorly by his bright example.'

Antony was recalled from Vercelli by St. Francis in the spring of 1223, and sent to preach at Bologna. A violent earthquake had just taken place there, whilst St. Francis was preaching in the open air, and he had availed himself of the impression it produced

to stir up the people to penance and the fear of God. Knowing the great fruits which followed Antony's labours, he was very desirous that he should carry on the work, and he did it so successfully that the whole city turned to God in a fervent spirit of contrition.

Immediately after Easter St. Francis gave a striking proof of his high esteem for Antony by erecting a chair of theology in Bologna, and appointing Antony to fill it. What makes this the more remarkable is that when visiting that city in 1220, St. Francis forbade the study of theology which the Provincial had established there, and when after the Saint's departure he resumed it, Francis solemnly cursed him as a disobedient son. The Provincial fell sick shortly after, and sent two friars to the Saint begging him to revoke the curse. But the messenger received the answer that it was too late, as God had confirmed it in heaven. Death, soon after, fell on the Superior. It has been inferred from the saying of St. Francis, 'I would rather have my sons pray than read;' that he wished them to be ignorant. This was not the case. But he certainly greatly feared their losing their humility and union with God, which he valued above all, and Antony was the first of his children whom he made a master of theology, feeling sure that his scholars would not only advance in that

study under his guidance, but make rapid progress in the school of Christ.

The following is the letter in which he made known his commands to Antony.

‘To his dearest Brother Antony, Brother Francis wishes health.

‘It is my desire that you should teach the brothers sacred theology, on condition that neither in you nor them the spirit of holy prayer, conformable to the rule we profess, be quenched. God speed you.’

It is certain that this authorization was not limited to Bologna, for we find our Saint teaching theology from this time wherever he went, which he certainly did by holy obedience. It was a very considerable addition to his labours for the remaining eight years of his life, during the whole of which time his lectures to his brethren were not allowed in any way to diminish the frequency of his sermons both in churches and in the open air. He took occasion to excite the Bolognesi to increased fervour of penitence from another earthquake which occurred on the afternoon of Christmas Day, and which was so destructive at Brescia that half the city was destroyed.

In the Lent of the following year St. Francis sent Antony to preach at Vercelli, where his old master, not yet Abbot of St. Andrew’s, must have rejoiced

greatly in renewing their friendship and in hearing the word of God from him of whom he had said, while yet his scholar, that he was his master in heavenly things, and that he looked upon him as an angel. When Lent was over Antony received orders from St. Francis to go to France, where he was to labour for two years and a half.

CHAPTER III.

Labours in France.

THE first scene of Antony's labours in France was Montpellier. He was in the constant habit of preaching during his journey thither from Vercelli, and many were converted by his sermons. The new heresy had perverted great numbers of the inhabitants, and Antony chiefly devoted himself to combating and disproving its doctrines. His wonderful gift of tongues was remarkably manifested in this city, as well as that other miraculous gift by which his voice was audible, without any effort on his part, to persons at the greatest distance from him in the very large audiences to which he was in the habit of preaching in open places. He was most assiduous in teaching theology to his brethren, and in the midst of all these fatiguing occupations he composed his sermons on the Psalms, a work full of quotations from the sacred Scriptures according to the Greek, Syriac, and Chaldaic readings, as well as from the writings of the Fathers, all of which had been learnt at Santa Cruz,

and were brought forth from the stores of his inexhaustible memory. This manuscript was the occasion of a miracle, remarkable as an anticipation of one of St. Antony's peculiar graces. It was stolen by a novice, who escaped with it from the monastery, Antony was not long before he missed it, and he prayed earnestly that it might be recovered. It has been remarked that it was the only time when he, who was to be the great finder of lost things in after ages, asked a grace of the kind for himself. It was, as we should expect, granted. The novice related how he was just going to cross a bridge, when there suddenly rose up before him a man of savage countenance, barring the way, threatening him with a drawn sword, and sternly commanding him to restore the book. He instantly turned back to the monastery, and throwing himself at Antony's feet, begged his forgiveness with many tears. He gained a far greater grace than he asked, for by the prayers of the Saint he persevered in religion, and died in the odour of sanctity.

The Friars Minor at Montpellier were much annoyed by the croaking of the frogs in a lake or pool near their monastery. Antony, finding them a great disturbance, gave them his blessing, and commanded them to be quiet. After this nothing more was heard of them. The piece of water is still called

by St. Antony's name, and the people of the neighbourhood say that when any of the frogs in it are taken to another pool they begin croaking again; while, if others not belonging to it are thrown into it, they become silent. He was preaching in the Cathedral on Easter Day, when he suddenly remembered that it was his turn to sing the Alleluias in the Community Mass. He made a little pause—to take breath, as his hearers thought—and at that moment he appeared in choir and sang the Alleluias, as was testified by eye-witnesses.

From Montpellier Antony was sent, after the Easter of 1125, to Toulouse, a city, at that time, more deeply tainted than any in France with the heresy of the Albigenses. Here, again, his public preaching and theological lectures went on vigorously, and in both he waged war to the death with false doctrine, and was the undaunted champion of Catholic truth. Here it was, as many good authors tell us, that the miracle worked at Rimini on Bonvillo's mule was repeated: the same proposal being made by a heretic, who had, most likely heard of that wonderful event, and disbelieved it, with the same result of the triumph of the truth, and the conversion of numerous heretics.¹ It was during his labours in France, though

¹ The name of the heretic in this story is Guinaldo. It certainly seems at first sight that the story is a repetition of that which has been already related. On the other hand, it must be rem-

neither place nor year is known, that Antony was favoured, on the Vigil of the Assumption, with a vision of the Blessed Mother of God. At that time, the Roman martyrology had not been approved by the Church for universal use, and there were three which were followed in different places, none of which merited to be adopted by the Church. In all three, the 15th of August was marked, indeed as the feast of our Lady's Assumption, as to her soul, but the language of doubt was used as to the exaltation of her sacred body. This was done on the strength of two passages, one from St. Augustine, and the other from St. Jerome, which were afterwards proved to be interpolations. In the martyrology which was in common use in France, it was expressly said that the Church preferred passing over the question in silence to asserting a doubtful thing. These words, so offensive to the ears of the true lovers of Mary, were omitted in many churches, and in others it was expressly added, that the Catholic Church holds and confesses the glorification of the body of the Blessed Virgin, as well as that of her soul.

embered that the miracle had a particular bearing on the heresy of the Albigenses. On this account the challenge may have been made in more places than one, and the ancient authors may have been right in mentioning two distinct occasions on which the miracle took place. There is the same remarkable repetition about the miracle of St. Antony's saving his father's life.

Antony, it is scarcely necessary to say, firmly held the true opinion on this point, and was in much perplexity and distress when the bell rang for Prime on the Vigil of the Assumption. Should he appear in choir, and listen to words so derogatory to the honour of his Blessed Mother, or should he absent himself? The first course seemed impossible to so loving a child of Mary, and the last was extremely painful to so careful an observer of every point of the Rule. Filial affection triumphed, and his Mother herself told him that it was well. He was kneeling in his cell rapt in the contemplation of her glorious Assumption, when she appeared to him with great brightness and splendour, assured him of the truth of the mystery, and bade him preach boldly the glorification of that pure body in which God Himself had dwelt.

It is interesting to know that the manuscript exists in which these words are written in the Saint's own handwriting: *Surge, Domine, in requiem tuam, tu, et arca sanctificationis tuæ*—‘That ark,’ he goes on, ‘which rested on the mountains of Armenia, that is, above all the choirs of the angels.’

The Chapter of the Province of Narbonne was held in the September of 1225. Antony was elected Guardian of the monastery at Puy, an office in which he showed himself a pattern of sanctity and humility. It was his delight to perform the

meanest and most servile work ; his fasts and mortifications were redoubled, and when he took a brief repose it was on a coarse sack filled with straw. At the close of November he went to preach at a Synod held at Bourges by the Apostolic Legate. On one occasion, when he was to preach in a parish church, the crowds who came to hear him were so great that the clergy requested him to deliver his discourse in the open air. Soon the sky became overcast, thunder rolled, lightning flashed, and a violent rain threatened every minute to pour down. The people were preparing to go away, when Antony bade them remain where they were and be quiet and attentive, assuring them, in the Name of God, that no rain should touch them. They believed his word, stayed till the end, and then dispersed to their homes. No sooner had they left the field in which Antony had been preaching, than they found the roads soaked with rain and covered with large hailstones. God had worked a miracle to reward the zeal of the preacher and the obedience of the people.

The bishops were assembled in Synod for the purpose of reforming abuses, and of settling the claims of Amaury de Montfort and Raymond of Toulouse to the territories which had been wrested from the latter in the war against the Albigenses. There seems to have been a great want of the

unanimity of spirit required for such a work. Antony, by divine inspiration, presented himself to the Fathers of the Synod, and exhorted them to discharge fearlessly and diligently the work before them. Then courageously turning to the Archbishop of Bourges, with the words 'Ad te, Domine, loquor,' he reproved him with the boldness of an apostle. The old chronicles tell us that the Archbishop had some doubts on certain articles of faith, and that Antony spoke of them without showing to all his audience that he was aware of the state of the mind of the prelate himself. He pointed out the fault of his incredulity with the greatest dexterity, and argued for the truth with the utmost solidity and with many authorities from Scripture and the Fathers. The Archbishop listened with edifying humility, made his confession to the fearless Friar, and ever afterwards led a most exemplary life.

Antony was at Limoges in the Lent of 1226; and here he was preaching on the Passion on Holy Thursday, when suddenly he stopped, and at the same instant he appeared among his brethren, and read a lesson in Matins, after which he vanished and finished his sermon. He returned to the Monastery of Puy after Easter, and continued to win many souls to God by his preaching. One day, while he was thus engaged, a man, dressed as a courier, came into

the church and made his way to a lady with a letter containing the intelligence that her son had been assassinated. The mother wept and lamented; there was great excitement in the congregation, and Antony could not make himself heard. Then, making a sign for silence, 'Lady,' he said, 'be at rest; you will soon see your son safe and well: this courier is sent by the devil to hinder the preaching of God's Word, and the glory that he sees He will gain by it.' As he thus spoke, the courier disappeared with a cry of rage, and Antony took occasion to warn his hearers of the treachery of the devil, and to be always on their guard, as he is continually assuming new disguises to surprise unwary souls. The enemy of mankind was so infuriated by being thus baffled by Antony, that he sought to bring discredit upon him and his Order by representing the Friars Minor as an offshoot of the Waldenses, who affected the love of poverty, and were sometimes called 'the poor men of Lyons.' But the purity of Antony's life and doctrine were more powerful than the slanders of the father of lies, and none of these calumnies produced any effect.

At this time there was living a Puy at man of very bad and dissipated life, who was a notary by profession. Whenever Antony met him, he saluted him with a profound reverence and with uncovered

head. The notary at first ascribed this to rustic simplicity, and got out of his way whenever he could, to avoid these signs of excessive respect which made him appear ridiculous. But one day, when he was unable to avoid him, he turned upon him furiously, saying it was well for him that he was a friar, as otherwise he would certainly run him through for his insolence in making him a laughing-stock. But Antony answered, 'My dearest brother, I do but pay you the reverence that I feel; earnestly have I begged of God the grace of being allowed to shed my blood for Him, but I am not worthy of it, and He has not granted my desire. Shall I not, then, do all possible honour to you, who, as I know by revelation from Him, will one day die a martyr of our Lord Jesus Christ? I beseech you, when that glorious day shall come, remember me, a sinner in your prayers.' The man turned away with a laugh, but the words were a prophecy. After a few years he was divinely inspired to accompany his bishop on a pilgrimage to the holy places. He completely changed his life, and became a good and fervent Christian. One day the bishop was conversing with some Moors, who were boldly blaspheming the mysteries of the faith, and his answers to them were so cold and cowardly, that his companion, unable to restrain his indignation, reproved him for a tepidity

so unbecoming his sacred office. Then, turning to the infidels, he bravely defended the Faith of Christ to the best of his ability, telling them that their prophet, Mahomet, was a foul impostor and a son of perdition. The Moors seized him and beat him savagely, and for three days he endured the most cruel torture at their hands. On the fourth day, as he was led out to die, he told his companions of Antony's prophecy, bidding them, when they returned to France, to make known its blessed fulfilment.

Antony had been guardian of the Monastery of Puy just a year, when, in the autumn of 1226, the Provincial Chapter met at Arles. He was present at it, and preached to the assembled fathers on the title of the Cross. While he was doing so, and speaking with the greatest tenderness of the love and the Wounds of his dying Lord, he saw before him at the door of the church that great lover of the Crucified, his father Francis, with his arms outspread in the form of a cross, and the stigmata in his hands distinctly visible. He looked upon his son with a bright and smiling face, and showed, by his gestures and expressions, the joy with which he heard him speak of the mysteries so dear to him and of those sacred Wounds, the copy of which he was privileged to bear in his body. So he stood for some time, and then, giving his blessing to his chil-

dren, he disappeared. The only person who was privileged to see the vision besides Antony was a very holy friar, named Fra Monaldo. All present felt in their souls a strange and heavenly sweetness, so that they doubted not that their holy father had been among them. It was his last farewell. Francis was then at Assisi, where, three weeks after, he died : and it almost seemed as though, before his departure, he wished to give this wonderful consolation to his son, whom he had hardly seen since that Chapter of Assisi, when he and all others had made no account of him, and whom he was not to see again till the day when he should give him a father's welcome, in the light of the Beatific Vision, to the presence of Him whose love had been their life. We have the express testimony of St. Bonaventure, that St. Francis himself related this miraculous visit.

At this Provincial Chapter our Saint was elected 'Custode' of one of the districts into which the Province of Narbonnese Gaul was divided, that of Limoges. On his way he preached in the different towns he passed through, and everywhere with abundance of fruit. On one occasion, when great crowds were assembled for the sermon, a platform had been erected for him. Before beginning his sermon, he charged the people not to be in the least alarmed at anything that happened whilst he was preaching, as the

devil would certainly do all he could to disturb them, but that his efforts would come to nothing. In a few minutes, the platform on which Antony was standing gave way and fell with a great crash, but no one was in the least hurt. The people, seeing that he had the spirit of prophecy, set to work with the utmost enthusiasm to repair it, and listened to him with increased attention and respect.

Antony's sojourn at Brive was marked by many miracles. One day when the scanty larder of the monastery was completely bare, and the community seemed likely to go dinnerless, he sent a messenger to a lady who was very devoted to him and his Order, begging her to give them some vegetables. The lady told her maid to go out and cut some cabbages, but the maid objected, as it was raining heavily. Her mistress replied that she would go herself, and this shamed the servant into obedience. She went into the garden, and brought the cabbages to the friars without a drop of rain having fallen upon her.

Antony had a particular liking for the little foundation at Brive, perhaps on account of its very secluded situation. There was a cave there which must have reminded him of Montepaolo, and which witnessed many of his prayers and penances, and where he received heavenly favours which no eye saw but that of God.

One evening, after Compline, the friars looked out

and saw some men doing mischief to the fields of a neighbour who was very kind to them. They went to tell Antony, who replied that no one was doing any harm, and that what they saw was an artifice of the devil to rob them of their spirit of recollection. In the morning they saw that the fields were uninjured.

A novice in this monastery, named Fra Pietro, had a temptation to return to the world. This was made known to Antony, who, calling the novice apart, breathed in his face, saying 'My son, receive the spirit of fortitude.' The young man fell to the ground in a swoon, and, on his recovery, exclaimed that he 'had been in heaven,' but Antony forbade his saying more. The temptation never returned, and he made an excellent religious. Antony also delivered a monk in a monastery which he was visiting from a temptation against holy purity. This monk confided his trouble to him, and earnestly besought him to change habits with him. Antony did so, and the temptation departed for ever.

Two miracles occurred during one of Antony's sermons at Brive. A woman had left her baby in its cradle asleep, and gone to hear him. On her return, to her horror, the child was dead. She ran to the Saint, imploring him to restore it to life; and he answered, 'Go home, my sister; God will comfort you.' On her return the child was alive and well.

Another woman, on returning from the same sermon, found that her child had fallen into a cauldron of boiling water. She lifted it out, and found it perfectly unhurt. A lady at the same place, who bore a great affection to the Order, was in the habit of giving the friars money, which was her own, and alms which she begged for them. Her husband treated her ill in consequence, and one day he met her returning from the monastery, and in his rage pulled out all her hair. The poor woman made her trouble known to Antony, who, with all his brethren, began praying for her very earnestly, and immediately she had all her hair restored to her. This miracle may be said to have been the cause of another, the entire conversion of her husband.

One beautiful story is told of a poor crazy man who was in the habit of following Antony about when he was preaching, and disturbing him by his mutterings and cries. The Saint very gently begged him to be quiet. 'I cannot,' said the poor man, 'unless you give me the cord you wear as a girdle.' Antony immediately untied it, and coming down from the pulpit, gave it to him. The man kissed it, and put it on. And as he did so his reason was fully restored to him, and throwing himself at the feet of the Saint, he begged his forgiveness, and thanked God amidst the tears and praises of the people.

CHAPTER IV.

In Sicily and Italy.

ON the 4th of October, 1226, St. Francis departed to his rest, and either in the December or January following, Antony left France for Italy, for the purpose of being present at the General Chapter to be held in order to elect a successor to St. Francis, his office in the district of Limoges entitling him to a vote. On his way to Marseilles, he stopped to preach in a village through which he was passing, and when his sermon was finished he accepted the invitation which was given to him and his companion by a poor lady to take some refreshment at her house. ‘Then,’ says the old chronicler, ‘the Lord, desiring to confirm him in His grace by means of somewhat of tribulation, which might make him know how much He loved him, caused that that lady, in order to honour him the more, should borrow a most beautiful cup of glass from a great lady who was her neighbour. Antony’s companion taking up this glass cup somewhat awkwardly, it fell from his hands and broke

into two pieces, and the wine was spilt on the table. Now this anxious Martha, keeping her eyes upon this, ran up in a moment, thinking of nothing but the glass, leaving a flagon in the cellar where she was drawing wine, but had as yet only filled that beautiful cup, that they might begin their meal at once, without waiting till the flagon was filled, intending to draw more while they were eating. Then going back to her cellar she found she had left the butt of wine running all the time, without thinking of it, and that all the wine had flowed out. Full of consternation, she went back to the Saint and told him what had happened. He in a moment bowed down his head on his arms, praying to our Lord, and as he did so the cup came together again of itself, and as soon as that poor lady saw this, she thought directly that as the glass had become whole again, so also would the wine have gone back again, and went from thence to the cellar: she found the butt full and overflowing, and bubbling up as if it had been new wine. So she was beside herself, and full of astonishment at these miracles, and was hardly allowed to finish her waiting upon the Saint, who made his way off directly in order to avoid the occasion of vainglory, leaving that household well disposed to entertain for ever the servants of God, believing, as is indeed the truth, that never are

goods diminished by almsgiving, but always increased thereby.'

At Marseilles Antony embarked for Sicily, and in the short time that he spent in that island he won many souls to God, and his zeal was rewarded by the foundation of houses of the Order in several places. The name of St. Antony is fondly cherished by the Sicilians, and their island is full of memorials of him. At Cefalù a cypress planted by his hand was living three hundred years after, and an orange-tree still flourished there in the cloister, said to be of sovereign efficacy in many disorders.

The Father Guardian at Messina, having to leave his monastery to preach the Lent elsewhere, appointed Antony to fill his place. There was no water near, and after Office the friars had to fetch it from a long distance. Antony had a very large well dug close to the monastery, for which work he collected alms. Everybody tried to dissuade him from it, as no one expected any success, but water was found in abundance, and in our own time it still works wonderful cures. On his return the Guardian was very angry, and scolded Antony for having offended against holy poverty, as well as for having deprived the friars of the merit they gained by their trouble in fetching the water. He went so far as to imprison Antony for some days, and to inflict a severe discipline upon

him. The place is now a chapel, and is visited on St. Antony's day by the inhabitants, as well as the refectory, in which some drops of the Saint's blood are still shown. This strange severity of the Guardian did but serve to increase the reverence in which Antony was held, by giving him an opportunity of exercising the virtues of humility and obedience. When a father was wanted for the foundation at Cefalù, he was sent there. A bell in the church-tower is still called St. Antony's bell, which has great power against storms and lightning.

While a monastery at a place called Tentine was being built, a carter was so crushed by the falling of a huge stone, that his body could hardly be recognized as such. Antony came to the spot, and no sooner had he said: 'By the merits of Francis of Assisi, and in the Name of Jesus Christ, return to life,' than the man rose up well and sound. Antony's holy life and miracles did wonders among the Sicilians, and even bishops came to him for spiritual direction. As usual, the devil sought to destroy God's work. A man invited him to dinner on a Friday, and set before him a capon. The Saint, without a word, and without a change of countenance, blessed the repast, and as he did so, the fowl was changed into a fish. But the miracle was concealed from his perfidious host, who immediately went to the bishop

and denounced him as a heretic. He sent for Antony, and the man thinking to cover the Saint with confusion, brought with him the dish from which he had eaten : but the confusion fell to his own share, when it was found to contain the skin and bones of a fish. An invitation to dinner seems to have been a favourite opportunity with the Sicilian heretics for displaying their malice and perfidy. We read of one, who, knowing Antony's courteous kindness on such occasions, insulted him by having an owl cooked, which he set before him, saying it was a very fine capon, and asking him to cut it up. The other guests were amusing themselves by exchanging glances with their host expressive of their ridicule of this simple friar who was so easily taken in ; but when they looked up again at the dish, there they saw in truth, an unmistakable capon. The master of the house and all the company confessed their malice and insolence, and abjured their heresy.

Our Saint left Sicily after the Easter of 1227, and reached Assisi just after Pentecost. At the General Chapter he was elected Provincial of Romagna, the scene of his early penance and solitude, and of his first missionary labours. This Province embraced almost the whole of Cisalpine Gaul, including Rimini, Venetia, and Carniola, and he visited the whole of

this large district, preaching continually, and gathering abundant fruit.

The first city of his Province where he stayed was Rimini, where so many wonderful miracles had been worked by him before. Here, as usual, he lectured on theology, which was much needed there, for the heresy, which he had driven away on his former visit, still lingered about its old haunts, and sought like the evil spirit spoken of by our Lord, to return into the house whence he came out, and which had been swept and garnished by the evangelical labours of Antony. It is marvellous that he could have grounded his scholars in theological science in so short a period, but, as has been truly said, one of his miraculous gifts seems to have been that of multiplying time, and he did the work of a year in a month.

From Rimini Antony passed on to Ravenna, Aquileia, and Trieste. At the last-named place he made a short stay and founded a house of the Order, which after the lapse of five centuries and a half, still bore the name of 'St. Antony's cell.' Another monastery, dedicated to St. Catharine, was founded by him at Gorizia. At the city of Udine we find him, for the first, and it would seem the only time, received with insult by the common people, who generally, like those of Judæa in our Lord's ministry,

‘heard him gladly.’ He had climbed into a tree to preach, but being met with jeers and contempt, he departed, shaking the dust from his feet. We may believe that the sweet Saint who repaid the attempts on his life at Rimini by obtaining the conversion of his enemies, was divinely inspired in the case of Udine, for the inhabitants of that city were struck with compunction after his leaving them, and have since been noted for a special devotion to him. In order to perpetuate the memory of their fault it has always been their custom, in painting St. Antony, to represent him preaching in a tree.

His next station was Gemona, where the great fruit which followed his preaching induced him to build a chapel in honour of our Lady, and also a house of the Order. The work was entirely carried on by alms, and one day Antony begged a labouring man whom he met with his cart, to have the charity to bring some stones in it for the new building. The man replied that he could not do so, as he was taking a dead body to the cemetery, pointing, as he said so, to a young peasant who was lying in the cart, but who was really alive and well. ‘Do so,’ replied Antony, and the man drove on. When he was out of ear-shot he went to the back of the cart to laugh with his companion at the trick he had played the friar, but he found, to his horror,

that the youth was really dead. He turned back, full of shame and contrition, to confess his falsehood, and entreat Antony to have pity on him. The Saint went back with the poor man, exhorting him on the way to thank God for having shown him his fault; then, making the sign of the Cross over the young man, he restored him to life. St. Antony is held in great devotion in the town of Gemona, where there is a chapel dedicated to him.

CHAPTER V.

First Visit to Padua.

ANTONY next went, by way of Conegliano, Treviso, and Venice, to Padua, where he arrived in the November of 1227. The city was in a deplorable state, racked with civil conflicts, and a prey to heresy and vice. He set himself without delay to the work of bringing the inhabitants to a sense of their miserable condition, and as they were anxious to see and hear the great preacher and wonder-worker of whom such marvels were told, crowds flocked to his sermons, and from the beginning they were followed by numerous conversions, both among the heretics and grievous sinners. The fervour and generosity of these first-fruits of his labours in Padua were an immense consolation to the Saint. They put themselves entirely under his direction, begging him to give them rules for a penitent and devout life. By way of seconding their pious desires more effectually, he advised them to find some place where they might regularly assemble for his instructions and

help. They bought a piece of ground, and opened a small church dedicated to our Lady 'della Colomba,' which was also called by the people, St. John the Evangelist's 'della Colombetta.' Hence these penitents came to be styled 'Colombini.'

On the Feast of St. John, the 27th of December, he here gave the members of the new Confraternity a long grey habit and a cord, like that of the Friars Minor, and here he used to meet them at stated times, to hear their confessions and to animate them to works of penance and virtue. When we remember that at this time Antony had certainly not spent two months in Padua, and that on his arrival he found it steeped in heresy, and abandoned to vice, the formation of this Confraternity in so short a time seems little short of miraculous.

When St. Francis was at Padua, seven years before this date, he founded two houses of the Order, one for friars the other for nuns, outside the walls. The Church was common to both houses, and the foundation was known as the 'Arcella Vecchia.' One of the first sisters received was a very young girl, belonging to a noble family in Padua, Elena Enselmini, and during Antony's two residences in Padua he was her director. Her love of mortification and her devotion to the Passion were intense, and her patience and conformity to the Divine Will in her

long and acute sufferings both of mind and body likened her more and more to her Divine Spouse, Who, after her holy death, manifested her sanctity by many miracles, and by the public veneration paid her and approved by the Holy See.

Another of Antony's spiritual children was Blessed Luca Belludi, also of a distinguished house in Padua, who is believed to have entered the Order of Friars Minor when St. Francis first visited the city. He was then very young, but his holiness and love of perfection were wonderful. As soon as St. Antony arrived, he sought him out, and was his constant companion and the loving imitator of his virtue during the remainder of our Saint's life. After his death Luca was the heir to many miraculous gifts, and when he died, full of years and graces, he was greatly venerated by his fellow-citizens, who, in memory of his devoted affection, loved to call him Fra Luca di Sant' Antonio.

The good citizens of Padua deserved the honour they enjoyed of St. Antony bearing the name of their city: for nowhere throughout Italy was he so greatly loved and revered. They took especial delight in his sermons, which they earnestly begged him to write out. He did as they asked, and in this first visit to Padua, which only lasted four months, he wrote twenty-three sermons in Latin—a considerable

addition to his labours as a preacher, director, and confessor, besides the numberless other ways in which he was always ready to spend and be spent for the glory of God and the good of his neighbour. Of these sermons thirteen are for the Sundays after Pentecost, beginning from the twelfth, four for the Sundays in Advent, one for the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas, and three in honour of our Lady.

The Monastery of Arcella was a mile distant from Padua, and it was inconvenient, and often impossible, for Antony, with his multiplied labours, to get there for the night. It often happened that when he preached or heard confessions in the evening, the city gates were closed before he had finished. It was necessary for him, therefore, to find a lodging in Padua, and there was no lack of candidates for the honour of receiving him. The successful man was a good citizen, who gave him a room where he could be quite private and uninterrupted. He is generally said to have been Tiso or Tisone, belonging to the ancient family of the Counts of Camposampiero, famous in the records of their time; and he is called in the ancient chronicles '*il borghese*,' most likely from the custom of giving that title to any powerful family which was the chief of a fortified town or '*borgo*.' Tiso loved and revered Antony greatly, and when he became an inmate of his house he

closely observed every thing about one whom he saw to be a great saint. One night, as he was passing by the door of his room, he saw brilliant rays of light streaming under the door, and on looking through the key-hole he saw a little child of marvellous beauty standing upon a book which lay upon the table, and clinging with both arms round Antony's neck. Who was He? But as he gazed, unable to take his eyes away, and saw the flood of heavenly light with which He was surrounded, and the ineffable tenderness with which He embraced Antony, and in return was caressed by him, and as he felt his own soul filled with an ineffable sweetness and rapture in watching the mutual endearments of the Saint and his wondrous Visitor, Tiso knew with a certainty that needed no further proof that it was indeed the Divine Babe of Bethlehem Who was consoling His favoured servant, and filling him with heavenly delights. After a time, Tiso saw the Child point towards the door and whisper into Antony's ear. Then he knew that his secret was told, and that his Lord, in the act of so wonderfully favouring His beloved Antony, was not unmindful of His poor servant outside the door, nor displeased with his loving boldness. So Tiso watched on with deepening joy and rapture, till the beautiful Child vanished, and Antony came back to common life. Then he

opened the door, and charged his friend, for the love of Him Whom he had seen, to 'tell the vision to no man,' so long as he was alive. Tiso promised; and it was not till after Antony's death that he revealed what he had seen, and he could never speak of it without shedding tears.

This favour is, perhaps, the most generally known event in the Saint's life, and, although it rests on the evidence of but one person, all the old chronicles say that Tiso's high position and character, his holy life, and the deep conviction and emotion with which he mentioned it made him an unimpeachable witness. The whole story, indeed, has such a character of truthfulness in its simplicity and minute details, that it commends itself to our belief on that ground also. We are far from saying that every beautiful imagination carries with it its own evidence. But we may surely believe that the very beauty of a story of this sort forces on those who question it the choice between admitting its truth on the evidence of the eye-witness, or giving him credit for a creative power for which the highest poets might well envy him.

CHAPTER VI.

Some Miracles.

ANTONY preached the Lent in Padua both in 1228, and during his second stay there in 1231. That city of his predilection has preserved the memory of the wonderful effects of his preaching on both occasions; and we may be sure that the zeal and fervour with which he had been labouring in its behalf would be doubly manifested and doubly blessed in that season of man's abasement and God's mercy. 'Grace is plentiful in Lent;' and we read that after some of his stirring calls to contrition and amendment of life there were those 'processions of penance' which were so striking a feature in St. Vincent Ferrer's ministry in the following century. The silent streets of Padua would resound at night with the strokes of the discipline and the sighs and prayers of the penitents. The town, which had been a theatre of worldly and sinful pleasures, had become a garden of piety and virtue, families were reconciled, hereditary feuds

abandoned, women given up to a life of wickedness renounced even amusements and personal vanities, usurers brought their ill-gotten gains and 'laid them at the Apostle's feet,' or, at his bidding, distributed them in alms. Miracles, as usual, were the constant accompaniment of his ministry. After one of his sermons, a young man was so filled with compunction that he threw himself at the feet of the Saint, intending to make confession of his sins, but as often as he tried to speak his emotion overpowered him, and his voice was inaudible from sobs. 'Go home, my son,' said Antony, 'and write down your sins.' The young man obeyed, and when, on returning to the confessional, he gave him the paper, each sin as it was read by Antony was obliterated, and at the end he held in his hand a blank sheet, and confessor and penitent joined in thanking God for so wonderful a proof of the contrition of the sinner, and the forgiveness of God.

A young man named Leonardo confessed that, in a fit of ungovernable passion, he had kicked his mother. Antony reproved him severely, and, in order to impress on his mind how unnatural and shocking a sin he had committed, told him that the foot which had been lifted against the mother who bore him, deserved to be cut off. He spoke so strongly and emphatically that Leonardo really believed his words

to express a command, and going home he took a hatchet, and actually cut off his foot. His mother found him fainting on the ground, and horrified at the state he was in, rushed, when she knew the truth, to Antony, whom she bitterly upbraided in her despair. He gently explained matters, and went back with her to the house. Then, kneeling down by the young man, whose simple obedience and wonderful courage greatly affected him, he bade him be comforted, and make an act of firm faith and confidence in God. Then he took up the foot, and joining it to the leg, made the sign of the Cross, and the two parts were perfectly re-united without wound or scar.

One day he met a soldier running violently from the city, and with such an expression of terror and anguish on his face, that Antony stopped him, and entreated him to tell him his trouble, and from whom or what he was flying. The man threw himself at Antony's feet, and confessed that in a fit of jealousy he had stabbed his wife, who was remarkably beautiful, and left her in a dying state. He was full of grief, saying that he knew her to be perfectly innocent, and laying all the blame on the unreasonable jealousy of his character. Antony bade him rise up, and return with him to Padua; they found the poor young woman in the agonies of death, but no sooner

had Antony blessed her with the sign of the Cross, than she rose up perfectly healed. And equally great was the invisible miracle that had been worked in the husband's soul, for he was completely cured of his jealousy, and lived in Christian harmony with his wife ever after.

To this period of our Saint's life belongs one of the most wonderful of his miracles, and one which strikingly displays his faith, charity, and humility. His father, Don Martin, was still living in Lisbon, enjoying the favour of the King, and holding office in the Court. A young nobleman, coming out of the Cathedral, was set upon and murdered by a party of assassins, who threw the body into Don Martin's garden, which was immediately opposite. Very early in the morning it was discovered there, by the traces of blood on the wall, and Martin was apprehended and put in prison. The danger of his father's position was revealed to Antony in prayer. Full of faith in his innocence, and in the power and mercy of God, he continued some time longer praying about the matter, and then went to the Superior of the Monastery of Arcella, and applied for leave to absent himself for a time from Padua. As Provincial, he was not bound to ask permission from the Father Guardian, but it was his way to embrace every opportunity for the exercise of humility, and to be

ingenious in making such opportunities. We shall find Antony, on another occasion, choosing rather to act by obedience than, as he might have done, by his own authority. Having obtained leave to go, he at once began his journey, without thinking of the distance from Lisbon, of the difficulty of getting there, the uncertainty of his arriving in time to save his father's honour and life, or the steps to be taken in order to do this. All those things were God's affairs. He had shown him his father's danger, and inspired him to go to his assistance, and when the time came, all would be made clear. He went on his way as quickly as he could, and praying earnestly. Suddenly he found the reward of his faith and the answer to his prayer—he was miraculously transported to Lisbon. Guided by the Spirit of Counsel, Whom he incessantly invoked, Antony went straight to the courts, and presented himself before the judges to speak for his father. It must have been a strange scene, when Antony stood before the judges, and they looked at each other in astonishment, wondering who this new comer might be, and feeling, perhaps at once, the influence which his words never failed to have. Still, where were his proofs? What witnesses could he call? Then, calmly and fearlessly Antony made answer that the murdered man should be his witness, and without another word he went,

followed by the judges and a wondering excited crowd of by-standers, to the young man's grave, which he commanded to be opened. The power of God was present with him, for he was obeyed without hesitation. Then Antony addressed the dead man, charging him in the name of God to say whether Martin de Bulloens was his murderer. The corpse rose into a sitting posture, and with one hand resting on the ground, and the other raised to heaven, declared in a loud voice that Martin de Bulloens was guiltless of his death. It is added that he then turned to Antony, begging him to absolve him from an excommunication under which he laboured, and that as soon as his prayer was granted he again fell back dead. Some writers also say that after hearing the miraculous testimony of the corpse, the judges urged Antony to declare who was the murderer, and that he replied : 'I am come to clear the innocent, not to denounce the guilty.' So saying, he left the grave, but it is not certain whether he immediately left Lisbon, or whether he remained the rest of the day with his father. When Antony returned to the monastery of Arcella Vecchia, he had been absent one day and two nights.

It has already been remarked that either there are two versions of this famous anecdote, or this was not the only occasion on which God was pleased

to make Antony the instrument of saving the honour and the life of his father. The second miracle is related in this place, although, according to the most probable accounts, it did not take place till nearly two years later, when the Saint was at Milan. It is not known precisely what office Don Martin held in the Portuguese Court; but it was one of dignity and responsibility, and involved the management of a considerable part of the royal revenue. More confiding than business-like, he seems to have given in the account of what he had received and laid out, and paid over the balance to his subordinate officials, without requiring any acknowledgment from them. After the lapse of several months, they came upon Don Martin for his accounts: it was in vain for him to protest that he had already given them in, and to remind his enemies of the circumstances. A plot was on foot to ruin him, and all declared that they had received no accounts, while he had no proofs to give. He was standing before his audacious accusers, stupefied by the blow that had fallen upon him, and despairing of proving his innocence, when suddenly his son stood by his side and commanded his father's enemies instantly to write a receipt for the money, mentioning the time, the exact hour, and the place, where and when they had received it, and describing the different

coins in which it had been paid, threatening them with terrible punishments from God if they disobeyed his warning. As soon as they had given the receipt the Saint disappeared, and Martin returned home rejoicing.

It is, perhaps, some confirmation of these marvellous accounts that we find Antony held in the greatest veneration, both in Lisbon generally, and in his own family, immediately after his death. He certainly never visited Portugal in the ordinary course of his apostolical ministry, nor is it very likely that his great achievements in France and Italy would soon make their way to a region so distant. But, as will be seen further on, the people of Lisbon and the family of Martin de Bulloens always considered that he belonged to them in a special manner, though he was to be known in the Church as the Saint of another city and of the family of St. Francis.

CHAPTER VII.

Antony and Ezzelino.

THE favourite subject for Christian art in the life of St. Antony of Padua is the exquisitely beautiful incident which we have already related of our Lord's visiting and embracing him in the form of an infant. Often, too, he is represented holding a lily, as an emblem of his wonderful purity ; but there is another subject, not so frequently chosen, representing a scene in which the gentle Saint, whom we have followed in solitary retirement, in miracles of charity, in unwearied missionary labours, comes before us in another character, that of the undaunted rebuker of tyranny and oppression, the defender and advocate of the helpless and oppressed.

The traditions which survive of his preaching add this feature to the others of which his character, as it has come to us, is made up. His sermons were addressed to audiences of all sorts, and succeeded with all. 'He distributed his learning,' says the old chronicle, 'according to the needs of those who heard

him in such a manner that all were satisfied. Hence his sermons were held by all to be so many miracles, and the people were dying of desire to hear him, especially men of letters, on account of his grace and eloquence of speech, as well as the subtlety and vivacity of his intelligence, by means of which he so marvellously gave the true meaning and number and weight and value to the things of which he discoursed. He had also a wonderful discretion, and ordinarily, great pleasantness, and yet with great severity and constancy did he reprove the great ones of this world, so that famous preachers who listened to him used to tremble with fear, and were wonderfully astonished at his having so great boldness. Many others went away, in order not to hear these reprehensions, or covered their faces when he uttered them. And yet were they so seasoned by him with a certain fitting quantity of salt, so to speak, and his wonderful virtue of discretion, according to the opportunities of times, places, and persons, that even when his teaching appeared at first to have some asperity, nevertheless in the end it was sweet and gentle and such as every one could bear, and thus without any scandal he frightened sinners, strengthened the weak, encouraged the poor, and made the obstinate tremble."

The scene to which we refer is one of these bold reprehensions. We see a young friar standing

with uplifted hand and a face of grave reproof, while kneeling at his feet, in an attitude of humble submission, and with a look of wondering awe, is a warrior in full armour, his sword cast on the ground beside him, and his girdle round his neck. The kneeling knight is Ezzelino da Romano, commonly called the tyrant of Padua, the same whose stern brow with black shadowing hair,¹ surges up before us from the red waves of that awful river of blood in Dante's Seventh Circle, among those

Che dier nel sangue e nell' aver di piglio.

There was no greater or more powerful house in the Marches of Treviso, in this and the preceding century, than that of the Ezzelini. Foremost in every chivalrous enterprize, brave, spirited, and ambitious, their faults and virtues were those of the mediæval knights of their age and country. But the last of the race, who comes into the story of St. Antony, was a monster of crime and barbarity, who, even in that age of iron-handed force, stands out pre-eminent for ruthless cruelty and unscrupulous ambition. He was born in 1194, and took the title, da Romano, by which he is generally known, from the fief of that name, conferred upon him by his worthy ally, the excommunicated Emperor Frederic II.

¹ 'Quella fronte c' ha 'l pel così nero' (*Inferno*, canto xii.).

He first attacked the city of Vicenza, and treated its inhabitants with savage ferocity. Then, towards the close of 1227, he fell upon Verona, and caused himself to be created Captain-General of the place. Like a destroying blast he and his soldiery rushed on, and in the following year laid waste the country round Padua with fire and sword. Ezzelino attacked and made himself master of the fortified castle of Fonte, belonging to the Counts of Sampiero, seized upon the person of Count Giacopo's son William, who was still a child, and threw him into prison, The Padovani rose like one man against the invader. There was a cry to arms throughout the city, an army was speedily collected, and marched to make reprisals on the castles of the Ezzelini.

Antony's heart bled for the trouble that had fallen on his beloved city, and not only did he grieve for that distress, but he saw the fruit of his labours, the work of his Master, the salvation of many souls, endangered by the tumult of excited passions, the bloodshed and rapine, and the thousand evils which war brings in its train. His indignation against the author of all these calamities was heightened by his personal affection for the Camposampieri. The child whom Ezzelini had shut up in prison was the nephew of his special friend Tiso, in whose house, as will be remembered, Antony had

been favoured with the visit of our Divine Lord. The tyrant was at this time at Bassano, and thither, on the 27th of March, immediately after the Easter festival, our Saint went to plead the cause of God and His people with him. Antony stood before Ezzelino in the simple majesty of holiness, full of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of the poor sinner before him, and in words of fearless energy reproved him for the ambition which made him—a young man in the flower of his age—trample on every consideration of justice and compassion, shed the blood of his brethren, stir up feuds and hatred where he found peace and harmony, and add to these acts of savage cruelty the basest arts of dissimulation and bad faith. He told him that God would hold him answerable, not only for his own sins, but for every act of brutality and rapine committed by his followers ; that now was the time, when the voice of God's messenger was sounding in his ears, to turn back from the path of guilty ambition, to put an end to bloodshed, to give peace to the land. He was to restore the innocent child to liberty, and the castle of Fonte to its rightful owners. Was not his imperial fief enough for him, and would not the praise of Christian moderation be a fairer prize than any blood-bought triumph? Then he went on to threaten him with God's

vengeance if he turned away from this warning, and to picture to him the life and death which would be his lot—his heart torn by the fear and hatred of those he had wronged, days poisoned by jealousy and suspicion, sin heaped upon sin, and the end of all to die with curses ringing in his ears, despairing of mercy, and lost for all eternity.

For some time Ezzelino strove to resist Antony's words, and those who were present expected a burst of furious anger from him, little used as he was to words of counsel, far less of rebuke. But the outburst did not come. They saw him cast aside his sword and throw himself at the feet of the simple friar, with his belt round his neck in token of submission and humility, begging him to pray for him to the Lord 'that none of those things which had been spoken might come upon him.'

Antony seems to have said no more to Ezzelino at the time, but to have left him to listen to the voice of conscience, whilst he himself went away to commend the matter in earnest prayer to God. As soon as he was gone the courtiers asked their lord how it was he had allowed the friar to address such language to him, and he is said to have replied thus: 'What could I do? I tell you that while that friar was speaking to me I saw his face all shining with such a glory that it filled me with awe and terror,

and I was conscious within myself of a feeling that I cannot explain, which compelled me to take off my belt and kneel down at his feet, as you saw me do, like a criminal; whatever he had told me to do, I should have obeyed him, so terrified and humiliated was I.'

Wonderful as was the effect of Antony's words on this ferocious tyrant, it was not lasting. In the immediate object of his mission he was, as we shall see, successful. But as regards his own soul, the miserable man seems to have turned from what may have been the last offer of grace, and to have continued his course of brutality and sin—the tyrant's life and death with which Antony had threatened him if he did not repent. Even before his bold visitor left Bassano, Ezzelino had so far recovered from his awe as to dare to make trial of his disinterestedness. He sent some of his followers to offer him a valuable present, and instructed them to kill him on the spot if he accepted it, but if he refused it to resent nothing that he said to them, however severe, in the way of reproof. The messengers offered Antony their master's gift with every mark of respect, begging him, of his kindness and charity, to accept the present which their lord sent by their hands, and to promise to help him by his prayers. 'God forbid,' said the Saint, 'that I should accept a gift all stained with

the blood of the innocent and of Christ's poor, which loudly cries for vengeance to the throne of God, and for which your master will have to give a strict account to Him. Go back, and bid him not to abuse His patience and provoke His wrath. Go back, I say, with all speed, that the roof may not fall upon you nor the earth swallow you up.'

The tyrant was struck with admiration when he heard how his offer had been spurned, and did justice to the saintly character of Antony. Although it was against his will that he had submitted to be rebuked and humiliated by the servant of God, he always held him in high esteem; he obeyed him by restoring the castle of Fonte to its rightful owners, releasing Giacopo Camposampiero's little son, and making peace with Padua, which would certainly have endured still greater severities at his hands but for the restraint imposed on him by his veneration for Antony during the short remainder of the Saint's life. Even after his death this veneration showed itself; for when he seized upon Padua in 1237, and spared neither Church nor priest in his sacrilegious covetousness, he left untouched all the offerings at St. Antony's shrine, laid no impediments in the way of their continuance, and allowed the Friars Minor to carry on the magnificent works which they had undertaken in his honour.

We may imagine the joy with which the Padovani greeted Antony on his return from Bassano, and how the love they had for him before would be deepened by gratitude for the generosity with which he had exposed himself to peril of death in braving the anger of the tyrant Ezzelino, and for the great and solid blessings he had won for them.

CHAPTER VIII.

Antony in Æmilia.

ANTONY only gave himself a few days at Padua to rejoice over the restoration of peace and to give thanks for God's mercies, before he addressed himself to continuing the visitation of his province. The part which now claimed his care was that which is Romagna proper, and which is also called Æmilia, from Caius Æmilius the Roman consul, who made the great road from Rimini to Placentia.

Antony's first visit on this occasion was to Ferrara. As usual, he travelled slowly, preaching frequently on his journey, visiting his brethren whenever any houses of the Order were near, and hunting out and attacking heresy wherever he found it lurking. His labours and miracles in Padua, and the success of his mission to the tyrant, made him the object of enthusiastic affection and reverence, and blessings greeted him on all sides as the peacemaker and the saviour of the country. Great numbers in Ferrara were converted by his preaching, and miracles continued to

confirm his ministry. One of these is singularly striking. A lady one day came to him in the deepest distress, entreating him to help her by his powerful prayers, and to remove from her husband's mind the cruel and unjust doubts of her fidelity which he entertained. The unhappy man was so overpowered by jealousy that he had outraged his wife by telling her that he did not believe he was the father of a child to which she had lately given birth. He repeatedly threatened to kill both child and mother. Antony consoled the poor wife with the kindest words, encouraged her to have great confidence in God, Who is the Helper of the helpless, and promised to make her trouble a matter of special prayer. After a few days he met the husband walking in the street with several friends, and they all stopped and began talking together. As they were doing so the child's nurse passed by with the baby in her arms, and the mother also was at a little distance. Antony stopped the nurse and began to notice and caress the child. Then, full of faith in God's power and mercy, he said: 'Tell me, dear child, which of these is your father?' and the baby, turning towards its father and fixing its eyes full upon him, replied in a clear and distinct voice, first mentioning his name, 'This is my father.' Then while all were silent from astonishment, and the father overcome with shame and

delight, Antony placed the child in his arms, saying, 'Be at rest, you can no longer have any doubts when your child's own lips have told you the truth.' The man burst into tears, asked pardon for his unworthy suspicions, and never again wronged his wife by them. This miracle is represented in marble in the Chapel of St. Antony.

From Ferrara the Saint went to visit the hermitage of Montepaolo and the different monasteries of Romagna, to the great delight and edification of the people, who remembered his preaching and the proofs of his sanctity which they had witnessed when he was with them six years before, and who now eagerly pressed forward to hear him and to receive his blessing. He revisited Bologna, where he first taught theology, and where his brethren at Santa Maria delle Pugliole, whom he had instructed in that divine science, were now his successors in teaching it to the clergy of the place. He was still there when he received orders from the Minister General to go and preach at Florence. He was received by his brethren at Santa Croce, and was called upon to preach almost immediately on his arrival. At that time one of the vices most prevalent in Florence was that of usury, and he attacked it with zeal and energy. Whilst he was doing this a miracle took place, for which we have the authority of St. Bonaventure,

and which is the subject of a picture in the Church of St. Petronia at Bologna. A man of good family and position, but a notorious usurer, died, and Antony was asked to preach at his funeral. Early in the morning of the appointed day the Saint had a revelation during his prayer that the soul of the unhappy man was lost. Antony took for his text the words, 'Where thy treasure is, there shall thy heart be also,' and preached to a crowded audience on the enormity of the sin of usury. Never had he spoken more powerfully or more fearlessly: many of those who heard him must have felt his stern reproofs come home to their own souls as he branded the usurer as the worst enemy of his fellow-creatures, rejoicing in their calamities, and welcoming times of dearth, or tempests, or floods, as so many opportunities of enriching himself at the expense of the sufferers, feeding on the hardly gained earnings, and drinking the blood of the poor: 'Nay, more than this,' he continued; 'cruel as the usurer is to others, he is far more so to himself. To all he is a pitiless enemy, but most of all to his own soul, since hardly ever does such a one escape eternal torments. This very man whom you are laying in the grave was one of these miserable beings; he was a miser, a usurer, and now he is buried in hell, where he will be tormented for ever and ever. Go to his house, and

in the safe where he stored his money, the treasure in which he delighted, you will find his heart.'

The excitement and horror produced by these words may be imagined: without waiting for the end of the sermon the people rushed to the house of the dead man, compelled his friends to open the safe, where, still warm and palpitating, his heart was found. Not satisfied with this they returned to the church and insisted on opening the breast of the corpse, which was seen to contain no heart. It was declared unworthy of Christian burial, dragged outside the city walls, and thrown into a place where dead animals were buried. The effects of this awful revelation of God's judgements were seen in the numerous conversions which followed, especially among those addicted to the vice of usury. But there were others less welcome to the Saint, for the veneration conceived for him by the Florentines was so great that he resolved, in his humility, rather to suspend his labours among them for a time than to continue receiving the universal homage which he could not avoid so long as he remained in the city. Accordingly he retired to Mount Alvernia in the Apennines, a spot consecrated by the memory of St. Francis and of the marvellous favours bestowed on him there.

CHAPTER IX.

Alvernia and Assisi.

LOCAL tradition still points out the site of the cave said to have been occupied by St. Antony in the rocky and wooded solitude of Alvernia, on which has been built a small chapel or oratory. He refused, out of humility, to inhabit the cave in which St. Francis had received the sacred stigmata, but his love for the great Saint made him choose another as near to it as possible. The record of that time of retirement and communion with God is only known to Him. A time of heavenly refreshment indeed it must have been, coming in the midst of wearying labours and incessant activity, to fortify and console him by unbroken intercourse with the Divine Friend and Lover of his soul, that interchange of descending grace and ascending answering love, in the strength of which he was to go forth once more and finish the short remainder of his pilgrimage 'to the Mount of God.' The Lent of 1229, which fell early, was drawing on, when Antony returned

to Florence. On his way thither, he passed through a city which is described as 'considerable,' and which must have been Arezzo, as it is the only town between Alvernia and Florence. The heretical teachers had contrived to insinuate themselves with the inhabitants, and counted a great many of them among the number of their secret adherents. Antony stayed there to deliver a course of sermons against the false doctrines.

A certain nobleman of Arezzo, to whom he was providentially directed, was of so furious and ungovernable a disposition, that he seemed utterly bereft of reason in his fits of passion. His wife, who was a good and gentle woman, one day used some incautious expressions which excited him to madness; and after subjecting her to the most savage ill-usage, even dragging her long hair out of her head, he flung her from the window into the court. The servants, hearing her cries, came to her assistance, carried her in, and laid her, scarcely breathing, on her bed. When his fit of rage was over, the unhappy man was overpowered by remorse and anguish. He was looking in despair at his ill-used and apparently dying wife, when it suddenly struck him that he had heard of the wonderful friar who was preaching in the city, and who was said to work marvellous miracles. He sought him out, and

throwing himself at his feet, confessed his guilt, and implored him to return with him to the house and help his innocent wife.

Antony made the sign of the cross over her, and then knelt down by her bedside and began praying fervently. As he prayed, every mark of violence passed away. She regained strength and health; even her hair was miraculously restored to her head, and she sprang up, giving thanks to God and His servant. The husband's soul was healed at the same time, and he never again was guilty of a violent word or action.

The Florentines welcomed Antony back amongst them with the greatest joy and reverence, and he remained with them through Lent, preaching continually and with much fruit. After Easter our Saint left Florence and continued the visitation of his province, stopping at the different monasteries on the way till he came to Milan. That city was torn by the Guelph and Ghibelline factions, and the latter, or the Imperialist party, had fraternized with the heretical Waldenses, who preached their pernicious doctrines with greater boldness than elsewhere, having so many supporters among the Ghibellines. The civil arm was raised against the heretics as disturbers of the public peace; and Pope Gregory IX. was aided in putting down the mischief by the

Government, for the Emperor Frederic II., now—for a time—assisted the Church. The strongest measures were enforced, and even those who harboured the offenders were made liable to heavy fines for favouring the excommunicated.

Antony was at once engaged in the war against heresy, in which he was a veteran soldier. He held public disputations with many of its principal teachers; and his powerful defence of the Catholic Faith, his clear explanations of its doctrines, and his zeal for the souls who had been reduced from it, won back vast numbers, inspiring them with a hatred not only of heresy, but of the unchristian spirit of faction and party warfare so prevalent everywhere in the Middle Ages, and so especially the bane and curse of Italy.

From Milan Antony went to Vercelli, where, it will be remembered, he had studied theology. He took up his abode in the monastery of his Order, and had the happiness of a meeting with his old master, Don Thomas, who had now for two years governed St. Andrew's Monastery as Abbot. He preached to the people, and then went on to Varese, the inhabitants of which city conceived the strongest affection for him. His preaching among them was most effectual, and they insisted on his founding a house of the Order in their town, near which there

is, to this day, a well blessed by him. His next halting-place was Cremona, where he made some stay, and where his labours were rewarded by the warm affection of the people.

Outside the gates was a little monastery near San Guglielmo, which had been founded by St. Francis nine years before on his return from the East. When Antony visited Cremona, the community, which had become too numerous, were about to move into a more spacious home within the walls. The holy founder had just been solemnly canonized by Pope Gregory IX., and when Antony opened the new church, he had the happiness of dedicating it to St. Francis, and of giving the habit to seven young men of the city, of whose vocation he was well assured. Cremona is rich in holy wells. There is one near the walls, which received the double benediction of St. Francis and St. Dominic, and in the garden belonging to the monastery there is another blessed by St. Antony.

Stopping at Bergamo on the way, the Saint passed on to Brescia. This city had been for some time infested by heresy, and distracted by discord, its usual companion. So long as a year ago, the holy bishop, Blessed Guala, who belonged to the Dominican Order, had earnestly entreated him to come among them, firmly believing that he whose presence

had restored peace and unity to so many towns ravaged by heresy and strife would bring the same good gifts to Brescia. The hope was fulfilled: the inhabitants, full of eagerness to hear him, came in great numbers to his sermons, and it was wonderful how quickly the false teachers lost ground and credit. Antony's burning words and saintly character were irresistible; and Brescia was soon an altered place. He was obliged to preach out of doors, as no church could contain the crowds who thronged to hear him. It is said that more than thirty thousand came at once. Certainly his success here was a great triumph of the Cross: so deep was the peace in which he left the city which had been for years torn by all kinds of dissension and tumult.

At Breno, in the neighbourhood of Brescia, there still exists a memorial of Antony's labours, an inscription let into the wall at the back of the pulpit in the church of St. Peter's Monastery which he founded there. It is placed underneath a portrait of the Saint, and is in these words: '*Hic divi Antonii de Padua concionandi locus est magnâ veneratione perpetuo tenendus.*'

From Breno he went, by the lake of Garda, to Trent where the Friars Minor had a house, and thence to Verona, which seems to have been one

of the last strongholds of heresy. Its adherents there bodily showed their colours. and openly adopted the name of Manichæans. At Verona, as at Milan, faction was the ally of false doctrine, and the miserable feuds of Guelph and Ghibelline were kept up, the former by the Count of Sanbonifazio, and the latter by Ezzelino da Romano. It is true that at this time Verona was outwardly at peace, and that the opposite parties were not in open hostility: but the affairs of religion were in a state of confusion, when Antony visited the city. It seems most likely that he occupied himself with preaching and other functions of his ministry, but he was suddenly recalled to Padua, which is at no great distance, to superintend a new foundation there. This was the restored Church of Sta. Maria Maggiore, or 'Mater Domini,' which had been built in the eleventh century by John Belludi, a merchant of Padua, who was the ancestor of Antony's devoted companion, Luca, of whom we have heard before. It had fallen into decay and had just been rebuilt by Giacompo Corrado, Bishop of Padua, in the very beginning of his episcopate. He determined to give it to the Friars Minor, who, as we know, had the little Monastery of Arcella without the walls. After concluding this business, Antony resumed his provincial visitation, which he completed at Mantua, where he remained till the

Easter of 1230. Immediately after the feast he set out for Assisi, where the General Chapter was to be held at Pentecost, at Sta. Maria degli Angeli.

Nine years had passed since he had first appeared among the crowd of friars from all countries at the Chapter of 1221, unknown and even outwardly despised. And now the whole of the north of Italy and the south of France venerated him as a Saint and an Apostle. It was but little more than eight years since he had been forced by obedience to break the silence in which he had intended to spend his life before the little community at Forli. He was still young, and he looked even younger than he was. Disease was already at work upon his constitution, and his austerities as well as his labours must have secretly worn away his strength. But when the Chapter received him at the already famous shrine of the Portiuncula, they must have rejoiced to think that, brilliant as his career had been, he was yet but at the outset of a long life devoted to the glory of God.

BOOK THE THIRD.

THE LAST YEAR OF A SHORT LIFE.



CHAPTER I.

Some notes of Franciscan history.

THE General Chapter of the Franciscan Order which was attended by St. Antony at Assisi in the spring of 1230, was a meeting of much importance in itself and in its results as to our Saint's own movements. It may be well in the present place to sum up some of the chief events relating to the Order which had occurred during the interval which separated it from the death of St. Francis in October, 1226. At the time of the death of the blessed Founder, the famous Fra Elias of Cortona was governing the Order as the Vicar of St. Francis. We find in the Franciscan Chronicles a list of nine virtues which St. Francis left in writing to his beloved disciple Ginepro, as the virtues which he himself had been specially inspired by God to practise. The sixth head of this list tells us that he loved to be reprehended, and gave infinite thanks to such as reproved him, but that it was much against his will that he reproved any one himself, although he was most zealous for

the honour of God, the salvation of his neighbour, and the observance of the rule; and that it was on this account that he renounced the office of General. Fra Elias, though so different in spirit from his great Founder, was yet a man of the highest ability and dexterity, perfect in the management of business, a general favourite, and at the time of which we are speaking, not yet known as an advocate of any relaxation in the observance of the rule. The circular letter which he issued on the death of St. Francis is given in the Chronicles, and is a well written document, breathing the true Franciscan spirit.

Many old writers, and among them the authors of the Chronicles themselves, tell us that Fra Elias was elected Minister General of the Order in the Chapter which was held some months after the death of St. Francis, and to attend which St. Antony left France. The truth is that Fra Elias was not elected in that Chapter, and that it was perhaps the disappointment of this seeming want of confidence in him that first sowed in his heart the fatal seeds of so much future evil. The successor of St. Francis was Fra Giovanni Parenti, a religious eminent for virtue and prudence. Honorius III., who had confirmed the Franciscan rule, and had always been a devoted friend and admirer of its great Patriarch,

died not long after him. The new Pope, Gregory IX. was the Cardinal of Ostia who had been the Protector of the Order under Honorius, and who made it his great duty and delight to advance in every way the glory of St. Francis. It seems that the new Pope was well acquainted with Fra Elias, and valued him highly for the many great qualities which he undoubtedly possessed. It may have been partly to make up to him for the seeming slight which had been put upon him, as well as from knowledge of his extraordinary ability and aptitude for such a business, that the Pope committed to his care the building of the magnificent monastery and church which he intended to erect as a monument to St. Francis and for the resting-place of his remains. The glorious pile of Assisi, known as the *Sacro Convento*, is due mainly to the munificence of Gregory and to the skill and taste of Fra Elias, and it was on this that he was occupied during the years which immediately followed the death of his blessed Father in Christ.

Meanwhile the whole country was full of the glory with which it pleased God on His own part to honour the Saint whom He had so lately taken to Himself. The common opinion as to his sanctity was too strong to be resisted, but the Pope, in order to satisfy the prudence of some of the Cardinals

ordered the evidence both of the virtues and of the miracles of St. Francis to be carefully examined and tested. The miracles multiplied so fast that the Process was very soon over, and on July 16, 1228, a year and nine months after the death of the Saint, he was solemnly canonized by the Pope at Assisi itself. The Bull is dated from St. John Lateran, the 26th of March of the same year, that is, on Easter Day. The body of the Saint was then in the Church of St. George at Assisi, and on the day of the canonization the Pope himself laid the first stone of the new and magnificent church which still exists. The translation of the body of St. Francis to the new church was solemnized on the eve of Pentecost, May 25, 1230, and was the first great business accomplished by the General Chapter at which St. Antony, as has been said, was present. The upper church, which contains so many beautiful frescoes now in a state of decay, was added afterwards, though a part of the original plan. The church in which St. Francis was interred is that which is now called the lower church.

There was, however, a still more important and a very difficult matter for the assembled Chapter to decide. St. Francis had left behind him a document which is known as his testament or will, in which, among a number of very beautiful and

characteristic sayings, he enjoined certain things upon the members of his Order as to the strict observance of poverty and obedience which were not contained in the original rule. This gave rise to a question among the Franciscans, many of whom were desirous that the testament should be observed, though at the same time it was doubtful whether its provisions were or could be made obligatory. One of these provisions forbade any gloss or interpretation of the letter of the rule, and another prohibited all applications for privileges to the Holy See. These were naturally matters as to which there would be a diversity of opinion, and which could only be finally settled by the highest authority in the Church. It was therefore resolved that a deputation of members of the Chapter should be sent to Rome to lay the question before the Pope himself, so great a friend to St. Francis in his lifetime and to the Order after his death. It was as one of these deputies that St. Antony was now to take his first journey to the Eternal City.

At this Chapter Antony was relieved of his charge as Provincial, and ordered by the Minister General, Giovanni Parenti, to give himself up entirely to preaching. The accounts which had been received of the wonderful conversions and the abundant fruit produced by his sermons led the General to believe

that he could better promote the glory of God in this way than in any other ; and we cannot doubt that the miraculous powers so lavishly bestowed on Antony were the occasion of its being expressly said that he was thenceforth to be at liberty to go and preach in any place to which the Spirit of God should call him. It was also resolved, at the suggestion of Rinaldo Conti, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia, that he was to have time at his disposal for writing his sermons, so that he, being dead, might yet speak, and labour for the glory of God and the good of his neighbour even after his earthly life was over. This, of course, could not be regularly done so long as he filled the busy and onerous post of Provincial.

It was during this Chapter that Antony prophesied, before its birth, the martyrdom of a child. A devout lady of Assisi very earnestly begged that one of the fathers might go to visit and console her, as the time of her confinement was approaching, and great fears were entertained for her life. Antony was sent to her, and he bade her be of good courage, as both she and the son she was about to bring into the world would do well. He added, with the yearning regret which never seems to have left him on this subject, that the child would enter the Order of Friars Minor, and—happier than himself—would win

the martyr's crown, of which he had not been found worthy.

The prophecy was fulfilled: after a childhood of singular holiness this lady's son while very young became a Friar Minor, and at the age of fifty was sent into the East on a mission. Fra Filippo, such was his name, was in the city of Azotus when it was treacherously given into the hands of the Sultan; and the Christians, to the number of two thousand, were condemned to death on their refusal to apostatize from their holy Faith. Fearful that some of them might be tempted by the dread of the torments which awaited them to declare themselves Mahometans, he obtained permission to be the last to die. The infidels granted his request the more readily as they hoped that his constancy would not be proof against the sight of the sufferings of his fellow-Christians. But no sooner was this army of martyrs led out to death, than the holy friar began at once to animate them with words of burning zeal, bidding them show themselves worthy soldiers of Christ, Who had revealed to him the night before that that day he should enter in the company of more than a thousand martyrs into the glory of Paradise. One after another, as Fra Filippo ceased not to encourage and console them, the Christians came forward fearless and rejoicing, and bared their necks to the

executioner's scimitar. The Sultan, enraged at the disappointment of his hopes, cried out that the accursed blasphemer of the Prophet should be then and there put to death with fearful torments; and before the eyes of the Christians who were still alive his fingers were cut off, joint by joint, while he with undaunted courage continued to address his companions, whose constancy was only the more confirmed by his heroic conduct. Mad with fury, the Sultan commanded him to be flayed alive, and his tongue to be torn out. It was done; but still, bleeding, mutilated, and dumb, the glorious martyr, by his looks and gestures, and above all by his bright example, cheered them on to the victory now so nearly won, till their bodies all lay dead on the battlefield, and their souls as their Lord had promised, went to celebrate their triumph in heaven. The infidels, as an additional insult, left the corpses of Fra Filippo and his companions lying many days unburied in the place where they had been slain; but the heavenly fragrance which filled the air around them bore witness to their sanctity, and filled even the Saracens with wonder and reverence.

Antony met an old friend at Assisi, Adam de Marisco, his fellow-student at Vercelli, who had been the pride of Don Thomas's class till the young friar from Rimini eclipsed them all, in spite of himself.

CHAPTER II.

Antony at Rome.

ON his arrival at Rome, Antony was appointed spokesman of the deputation, and he laid the matter before the Pope, and stated the opinions and arguments on each side with his usual modesty, force, and lucidity. Gregory received the fathers very kindly, listened with attention to their statement of the difficulty, and said he would take time to consider it. It was three months before he decided the question by a Bull dated from Anagni, on the 28th of September, 1230. This Bull is to be found in the Chronicles of the Order, and it shows us what the points were as to which the discussion had arisen. The question of the obligation of observing the testament of St. Francis is the first. The others relate to certain passages in the rules, as where it is declared that the Frati are obliged to observe the Evangelical Counsels, and it is doubted whether the obligation extends to all the Counsels, or only those which are specially mentioned: or, again, to the prohibition as to receiving money,

or having any property, even as a body, or the rules as to the absolution of reserved cases, the examination and appointment of preachers, the faculty of receiving members into the Order, the voters for the election of the Minister-General, and the rules about not entering the convents of nuns. As St. Francis had expressly forbidden any gloss or commentary on his rule, it was necessary that the doubts which naturally arose on subjects where the rule seemed ambiguous should have to be settled by the Pope. In the case of the testament of St. Francis, the Pope declared that although he was convinced of the piety of the intentions of St. Francis, as well as of the desire of the Frati to be altogether conformed to his will, still, considering the danger to souls, and the difficulties that might arise, the Frati were not obliged to observe the testament, inasmuch as no such obligation could be laid on them without their own consent, and especially that of their Ministers, and also because no one had power to bind his successor.

The Pope was much pleased at having Antony in Rome. He conversed with him often and familiarly, and the more he knew of him the greater was his esteem for his deep theological learning and his affection for his person. Indeed, it was said that he loved him so much that nothing but his zeal for the

many souls whom our Saint's preaching and counsel would save and benefit could have induced him to part with him any more. He was very anxious that Rome, too, as well as other places, should hear the great preacher who had triumphed over heresy and sin in so many other cities. He ordered Antony, therefore, to preach before himself and the Sacred College. Rome was crowded with foreigners at that time, in consequence, as it seems, of the jubilee of the Crusade which had just been proclaimed, which had drawn strangers from all parts of Europe to the Holy City. Whatever the reason was, we cannot but be reminded of the great Pentecost at Jerusalem, when we read the list quoted from the ancient manuscript by the Bollandists, enumerating Greeks, Spaniards, Germans, French, English, Scotch, Flemings, Swiss, and Slavonians. The sequel makes the parallel more remarkable.

These foreigners, then, crowded together to see the famous preacher; to see him was all they expected, for how could they hope to understand his language? Yet so it was: 'every man heard him speak in his own tongue,' and he seemed to each one to speak it with perfect facility and propriety. So far as our records reach, St. Antony was the first to whom this wonderful gift was ever granted since the days of the Apostles. After him, it was bestowed on

St. Bernardine of Siena, at the Council of Florence, on St. Louis Bertrand and St. Francis Solano in America, and above all, most fully and gloriously on St. Francis Xavier in the Indies, with whom this gift seems to have been almost permanent. We can hardly doubt, after what we have seen of Antony's preaching in Italy, Carniola, and France, that the same favour was habitual with him also.

In proportion to the wonder excited in Antony's hearers, was the interior force with which his words spoke to the soul of every man present. To each they brought home the conviction, the compunction, the strength, that was needed by each, and the Holy Father was so struck with admiration by his profound knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, and his theological learning, that he broke forth into the well-known exclamation: 'This is the Ark of both Testaments, and the storehouse of the Sacred Scriptures.'¹ It may not be out of place to quote here the words of the learned doctor, John Hay: 'Not without reason did the Pope give him the title of "Ark of the Testaments," for the pages of both Testaments were so clearly impressed on his memory, that, like Esdras, he could, in case of need, have perfectly restored the Sacred Scriptures

¹ 'Arca utriusque testamenti, et divinarum Scripturarum armarium.'

from his memory, even if all manuscripts had been destroyed. This is testified by those persons who had long enjoyed daily intimacy and familiar intercourse with him. Neither would he have lacked the power, if the case required it, of explaining and interpreting all the divine Scriptures with clearness and in their manifold senses.

It must be again remembered that, necessary as the perfect and deep knowledge of Sacred Scripture must always be to any great preacher, there were particular reasons in the mission of St. Antony, to convert the heretics of his time, why he should have been armed with an extraordinary grace of knowledge and interpretation, and of the gift which we are told he so constantly showed in his sermons, that of pointing out the harmony and correspondence between the Old Testament and the New. The revived Manichæism of the Albigenses made this gift specially appropriate in him, inasmuch as one of the most specious tenets of the sect was that which denied and rejected the God of the Old Testament in favour, as it seemed, of the God of the New.

Gregory was even more impressed by the sanctity of Antony, than by his extraordinary gifts and his erudition. Some authors assert that he would fain have kept him constantly with him, so that he might take counsel with him in matters concerning the

government of the Church, but that he was baffled by the humility of the Saint, who succeeded in escaping from a position which would have brought with it so much honour and consideration. The Pope did actually keep Antony with him four months, during which time he was in the habit of constantly conversing with him, and he must have learned many wonderful secrets of that blessed soul, which were, perhaps, manifested to the Vicar of Christ by the Divine will, in order that he might know, by personal experience, the heroic virtues and supernatural gifts, which procured his canonization. It is impossible not to feel that this visit of Antony to the Pope, who unhesitatingly granted the petition for commencing the process of his canonization, before he had been dead a full month, was providentially arranged, and that it was God's will that, as Gregory had known and loved St. Francis, whom it was his happiness to raise on the Altars of the Church, so, too, should it be with the saintly founder's 'eldest son.'

At length, after mature deliberation, the Pope, as has been said, gave his decision on the controverted points. He was then residing at Anagni, where, as is expressly mentioned in the Bull, he received Father Parenti, the Franciscan General, who, having completed the business of the Chapter of Assisi, presented himself before the Supreme Pontiff, to accept

his decision concerning the affairs of his Order. Then, at last, Gregory parted with Antony, charging him, before dismissing him with the apostolic benediction, to resume his labours of preaching wheresoever he should be inspired by the Holy Spirit to go, and very earnestly recommending to him the request of Cardinal Conti, and of many others, that he would commit his sermons to writing.

Many good authorities tell us that St. Antony now betook himself once again to the beloved solitude of Alvernia. It was natural that as soon as he felt himself free he should indulge for a time the overpowering love for retirement and communion with God which characterized him all through his life. But he was not to remain long at Alvernia. It was to Padua, the city he loved so well, and which had so richly rewarded his labours by the abundance of fruit he had gathered there, that Antony was divinely inspired to return. It was there, eight months later, that his sacred ashes were to be laid. September was nearly past when he turned his back on Anagni, and, staff in hand, began his long journey, and it was November when he reached the monastery of Sta. Maria Maggiore in Padua. He may well therefore have had time to pass a few precious days on the lonely mountain side, sanctified by the marvellous favours there bestowed upon St. Francis.

CHAPTER III.

Second visit to Padua.

ANTONY was welcomed by the Padovani with every demonstration of love and gratitude. The memory of his labours and miracles was fresh in their hearts ; and, above all, he was universally venerated as the peacemaker who had risked his life and liberty for his brethren by his fearless pleading with the tyrant Ezzelino, and to whom they owed the rest and peace which the city still enjoyed. He gave himself no time to recruit after his long journey on foot from Anagni, but at once began to preach to the people, who thronged to hear him as eagerly as ever. One of the earliest conversions which we hear of in this second visit to Padua is very remarkable. There were some woods at no great distance from the city, which were the hiding-place of a band of robbers and assassins, who were the terror of the country. Italy was infested at this time with these banditti, who were frequently disbanded soldiers, and in consequence lived under a kind of discipline and organization of

their own, which made them still more formidable than ordinary robbers. They were not afraid to appear in the towns and villages; and such was the terror they inspired, that it was very seldom that they were interfered with by the authorities. Twenty-two of these men, having heard of the famous friar to whose sermons all Padua was flocking, determined, out of bravado, to disguise themselves, and go to hear him. They had been told that, like another Elias, he inflamed men's hearts by the fire of the Spirit of God, and that no one could resist his words. They found it to be true; for as Antony spoke, they seemed to see flames darting from his mouth, and to feel their hearts pierced as with keen arrows. As he went on, they saw that God must have revealed their presence to him, for he described their crimes as though he had seen them committed; and after having dwelt, in words which made them tremble, on the punishment which would certainly fall on impenitent sinners in the next world, he invited them with the tenderest charity to make their peace with the God Whom they had offended, and to return to the outstretched arms of His mercy. When the sermon was over, they all went to Antony, weeping and penitent, and told him who they were, why they had come, and how his words had touched their hearts. He received them with the utmost com-

passion and instructed them for confession, which they all made with great humility and fervent resolution. In taking leave of them, Antony solemnly warned them that if they returned to their former sinful life, and abused the grace which God had so wonderfully granted them, it would not again be offered ; that they would fall into the hands of justice, and die a public and shameful death. By far the greater number persevered in leading a good life, and died in excellent dispositions ; the few who went back found that the Saint's words had been prophetic, for they were all taken prisoners and executed. The story was told by the last survivor of the band, who died full of faith and confidence in God, after completing the penance which Antony had given him of making twelve pilgrimages to the tombs of the Apostles at Rome.

After Christmas Antony began a course of lectures on the Christian Faith at Sta. Maria Maggiore. We have seen how vigorously he attacked heresy on his first coming to Padua, and how wonderful his success had been in converting great numbers of its adherents. But his vigilance never slumbered ; and he took this opportunity, when he was explaining the Catholic doctrines, to challenge the enemies of the Church, and to pursue the evil into the secret lurking-places where it still lingered. We have a striking proof of

the triumph won by him in the city which he found so infected with heresy. Not three months after his death Pope Gregory IX. addressed a Bull to the authorities and citizens of Padua, in which he speaks with high praise of their zeal for the truth, their hatred of false doctrine, and their purity of manners. When we remember that, though others had certainly laboured there before Antony, the chief burthen and heat of the day was borne by him, and that from his hands the Lord of the harvest received His fairest and fullest sheaves, we feel that even on his throne in heaven his heart must have rejoiced at this praise given by Christ's Vicar to his beloved Padovani, who were, in the affectionate words of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, his 'hope and joy, and crown of glory.'

Antony's charity was, as we know, not confined to the spiritual needs of his children: he exercised it, as we have so often seen, not only to relieve the distress of an innocent wife, or bereaved mother, or sick sufferer, but to help in what might be called an inconvenience or annoyance, rather than a grief as when he worked a wonderful miracle to repair the borrowed cup, and to restore the wasted wine, and even, as we shall see presently, to prevent a dress from being soiled.

Debtors were a class of sufferers who were the

frequent subjects of his considerate charity. In Padua, as elsewhere, the cruel absurdity prevailed of imprisoning such persons, and so making it impossible for them to help themselves. Antony appealed to the government in their behalf, and we have the result in a decree, issued immediately after his death, in which it is declared that every debtor who gives up to his creditors all that he possesses at the time, shall thenceforward be free from molestation, and that it is unlawful to arrest or imprison him. The decree expressly states that this indulgence is granted at Antony's request: *Ad postulationem venerabilis Fratris beati Antonii*. We may remark by the way that the title 'beatus,' here prefixed to his name, shows that his *cullus* began immediately after his death. A stone is still to be seen in the town-hall of Padua bearing an inscription which records this resolution in favour of debtors—a memorial of St. Antony's charity and the gratitude of the Padovani.

It was about this time that Antony, being less incessantly occupied with preaching than usual, set about the work imposed upon him by the Bishop of Ostia, of writing his Sermons on the festivals of the saints. He died before the series was completed, but he wrote out fifty-seven, from Christmas to the Commemoration of St. Paul, and it is marvellous how he found the time. For although he was not

preaching so continually as in Advent and Christmas, yet, as we have seen, he was engaged in teaching theology and lecturing on the Catholic doctrine, his labours in the confessional were endless, he never was known to refuse to hear a penitent, he constantly visited the sick and afflicted, and, even in the matter of preaching, his labours were only relaxed to be resumed when Lent began, more energetically than ever.

Antony's health had now been for some time failing. His continual and extraordinary mortifications had enfeebled his constitution, which was at the same time tried by his public labours and fatiguing journeys. Symptoms of the dropsy which brought him to the grave had appeared some time before this, and being neglected, the disease made rapid progress. And yet he worked harder than ever in this last Lent of his life, only a few months before he entered on his rest. The tale of this Lent of 1231 tells us how faithfully his work was done. From morning till night he laboured, never breaking his fast till late in the evening, and then only with such a scanty allowance of the coarsest food as was sufficient to support him through the next day's toil. He was constantly in the pulpit or the confessional, and the zeal of the Padovani corresponded with his own. Never had such a Lent been seen in Padua: crowds thronged

to confession, and it seemed as though no number of priests would suffice for the needs of the people.

The fame of Antony's preaching drew the people for miles round to hear him, and we read that the roads presented the spectacle of a continual procession of persons of every age and condition ; soldiers, merchants, noblemen, ladies of high rank and poor labouring people, all anxious to share the blessings which attended the ministrations of the holy friar. It was a common thing for many to rise at midnight and walk long distances with lighted torches to secure a place in the church. Corrado, the good bishop of Padua, went himself, and encouraged his clergy to go, to hear Antony, and very soon it was found necessary to abandon the churches and to erect a pulpit in some open space outside the walls—for what church could hold thirty thousand persons ? It was his practice to organize a religious procession, or 'Stazione,' from the cathedral to the place where he was to preach, and as soon as the time came for forming it the market was deserted, the shops were closed, the squares and houses left empty ; all Padua was on its way to the cathedral. As soon as he mounted the pulpit there was dead silence throughout his vast audience, a silence which could hardly be said to be broken by the sighs and tears which, as he went on, were drawn forth by his burning

words; for it was one of the habitual miracles attending on Antony's preaching that none of these demonstrations of feeling, so frequent and unrestrained in an impulsive Italian crowd, were ever known either to disturb the preacher or to hinder his being heard with perfect ease by every person present. It was found necessary to station guards round the pulpit, who attended him to Sta. Maria Maggiore after the sermon was over to protect him from the numbers who pressed round him to kiss his hand or touch his habit. Little indeed would have been left of the latter but for these precautions, so eagerly did the women try to cut pieces from it to be kept as precious relics.

Besides these regular and stated occupations, there were innumerable works of mercy and charity which claimed his attention and seemed to multiply day by day. There were the poor debtors to plead for and to release from prison, their starving families to beg for, the sick to visit, and the afflicted to console. There were enemies to be reconciled, family disputes to be settled, unlawful gains to be restored: Antony was at everybody's beck and call, and never too busy to listen and to help.

A time so rich in the conquests of grace could not but rouse the powers of evil to do their utmost to mar and hinder the work of God. Furious at

seeing so many souls snatched from his grasp, the devil exerted all the arts of his malignity to blast Antony's reputation and to stir up envious feelings against him; his life, even, was aimed at, but no weapon prospered against him, and no calumnies harmed him. At length Satan attacked him in person. Once during this Lent, the Saint was taking a short rest in sleep, when he felt his throat violently grasped till he was nearly strangled. He made the sign of the Cross, and, as well as he could, uttered the name of Mary and recited the hymn, *O gloriosa Domina*, which was one of his favourite devotions. Immediately his cell was flooded with brilliant light, by which he saw the enemy of souls flying from the spot; and after giving thanks to God and our Lady for his wonderful deliverance he calmly returned to rest.

A penitent of Antony's was one day prevented from going to hear him preach by the duty of attending on her sick husband. Her house was two miles from the place appointed for that day's sermon, and the intervening country was very woody, so that it was quite impossible even to see the spot which had been chosen. Nevertheless, it struck her that if God, to Whom nothing is impossible, so pleased, He could make the preacher audible, as had been the case before, at any distance, and stepping out on the balcony she listened attentively. Her faith was re-

warded, for she heard every word as clearly and easily as if she had been close to the pulpit. Full of wonder, she had her husband's bed moved to the window, and the same miracle was worked in his case. They could hardly believe their ears, and when their neighbours returned home after the sermon they inquired the subject of it and found that they had indeed been enabled to hear it.

A lady was hurrying to the sermon one day, attended by some of her servants, when her foot slipped and she fell into a muddy ditch by the side of the path. She was greatly distressed, for the dress she wore, as an old writer says, was new and rich, and she dreaded a scolding from her husband, who had one of the hot tempers which would seem to have been the trial of so many wives in Antony's time; but when her servants lifted her up, there was not a spot or stain on her clothes.

On another occasion, when the Saint was hastening to escape from the prayers and blessings of his hearers, a man carrying a little child in his arms passed through the guards, and kneeling at Antony's feet implored him to have compassion on his affliction. The little girl, besides being subject to epileptic fits, was so terribly deformed in her feet that she was unable to stand, and could only crawl on her hands and knees. The father begged Antony with many tears,

to make the sign of the Cross over the poor child, and no sooner had he done so than she stood up and began walking with the help of a stick. But before they reached home she threw it away and ran into the house, being perfectly cured of all her infirmities.

In the same way he healed the lame child of a woman by the sign of the Cross, and in this instance we are reminded of the faith of the Syrophenician, and the delay by which our Lord tested it. Antony tried to escape from the woman's entreaties that he would make the sign of the Cross over the boy, but the more he evaded her request the more earnestly she pressed it, saying that she was sure that if he would do as she begged him God would heal her child. At length he yielded, and the cure was instantaneous. He charged her not to speak of the miracle during his life, and assured her that her faith, not his merits, had won this grace.

CHAPTER IV.

Sermons of St. Antony.

It is always a matter of regret when we possess but slender means of becoming, as it were, personally and intimately acquainted with the saints of the Church whose lives we are studying. It must have occurred more than once to the reader of a biography like the present, that we should know more of St. Antony as a man if some of his religious brethren had noted down for us more of his sayings, more records of his personal habits, more characteristic anecdotes, if we possessed a collection of his letters, or if his sermons had come down to us in a form which might enable us to discern more minutely and clearly the individual features of his mind and heart. In some of these ways many of the saints have become distinct and familiar images in our minds. St. Francis himself is revealed to us in many beautiful anecdotes and sayings: St. Chrysostom is known to us by his homilies as a man, and not only as a preacher. St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis de Sales, and St. Teresa, are

painted for us in their letters. It is not so with St. Antony of Padua. If we may trust the most erudite and sagacious of his biographers, his sermons have never yet been published as they exist in the original manuscripts, and we may fairly suppose, from the editions which we possess, that those original manuscripts only contain the notes and heads, or what we may call the bones of the discourses which he delivered, or what, after having preached them, he thought worthy of noting down as such. A careful study of even these scanty and dry remains will reveal a great deal to a theological reader, who must, however, always remember that the centuries which separate him from St. Antony, have been centuries in which editors and compilers thought themselves at liberty to adapt, arrange, omit, and even add freely to, the materials which lay before them. We may, however, perhaps trust an editor like the learned Pagi, who in 1684, published St. Antony's *Sermons on the Saints*, from an old manuscript of the century in which the Saint lived. We may gather at least some notion of his method by taking one of the sermons as it lies before us in the volume published by Pagi. If it is a correct representation of what St. Antony left behind him, it is one of the sermons which occupied him during his last period of leisure at Camposampiero.

The sermon we select is one on the Annunciation

of our Blessed Lady. Under this head St. Antony gives us, in fact, four sermons, and as all the four are comprised in about thirty small pages of large print, with an ample margin—each page containing less matter by at least a third than that now before the reader's eye—we may be pretty sure that we have only the barest skeleton of what St. Antony might have preached in each case. The first sermon goes through the Gospel of the day, which is, of course, the history of the Annunciation, under four heads or points, the Mission of Gabriel, the Annunciation of the Incarnation, the Trouble of our Lady, and the 'Supervention' of the Holy Ghost. Under the two first heads and the last—the third is omitted in the body of the sermon—we have notes either from parallel passages in Scripture, the meaning of words and names, the glosses of the Fathers, and the like sources, which might be expanded at will by a practised preacher. Thus, 'Galilee' is said to mean a 'wheel,' or 'migration,' and the human race is said to be running from sin to sin, and 'migrating' into hell, from the slavery of sin to the damnation of hell, but that the strength of God—which is the meaning of the word Gabriel, or 'God my strength'—was sent to turn the rolling wheel to life, and make men 'migrate' from earth to heaven. Our Lady is compared to the beautiful Rebecca of Genesis xxiv., and

then we have heads of thought as to her beauty, according to the words of the Canticles, *Pulcra es, amica mea, suavis, et decora sicut Hierusalem*—‘She is fair in her humility, dear in her charity, sweet in her contemplation, and comely in her virginity, like the heavenly Jerusalem in which God dwells,’ as it is said of our Lady, *Qui creavit me, requievit in tabernaculo meo*, that is, ‘in my womb.’ When he comes to the words ‘espoused to a man,’ St. Antony gives from Bede the three reasons why our Lord chose to be born of one who was espoused. He goes on commenting in this way on the whole of the first part of the Gospel. He thus puts the remarks on our Lady’s trouble under this head, instead of separately, and remarks on the beautiful mixture of prudence and modesty which it shows.

The same method is pursued in the other points. To read them as a sermon would be tiresome, but they contain the germs of many sermons. ‘Christ is conceived in Nazareth, born in Bethlehem, crucified on a hill in Jerusalem; that is, He is conceived in humility, born in charity, and crucified in elation.’ There are five persons in Scripture, he says, whose names have been given before they were conceived. Isaac, Samson, Josias, John Baptist, and our Lord. These signify five classes of His elect, the charitable, teachers whose life is as good as their teaching,

persons of devout prayer and mortification, penitents, and good rulers of the Church. In each case the name is made the foundation of the interpretation.

After this first sermon comes another, which is called 'Moral,' in which the Gospel of the Annunciation is explained of the conception of the spirit of salvation in the soul. Our Lady is the faithful soul, Gabriel the holy inspiration of grace, and so on. Then there is an 'Allegorical Sermon,' in which the circumstances of the vision of Elias on Mount Horeb, the mighty wind, and the earthquake, and the fire, and the whistling of a gentle air, are applied to the Annunciation—the salutation of the Angel is the mighty wind, the trouble of our Lady is the earthquake, the fire is the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the whisper is the consent of our Lady, in which 'the Lord was,' because until she consented the Incarnation did not take place. Here, as in many other places, we find illustrations from natural facts, or what are supposed to be such, very much as in the sermons and writings of St. Francis de Sales. Speaking of our Lady's trouble, he says that the shells which receive the drops of dew and so 'conceive' pearls, are shut up out of sudden fear and fright if it should happen to lighten, because they fear that their progeny may be defiled thereby. So the Blessed Mary, who conceived the pearl of angels from the

dew of heaven—here he quotes the text *Rorat cæli desuper*—was suddenly disturbed at the flashing light of the angel, as it is sung by the Church—*Et expavescit Virgo de lumine*. So we also, who desire in the dew of grace to conceive the pearl of a holy life, ought at once to be afraid at the bright light of human praise, to repress and humble ourselves, and to shut ourselves up and not go forth, lest we lose by the favour of men what we have well conceived.

The last sermon for this feast is on the same passage of the Old Testament which has been applied to the Annunciation in the second sermon. But in this case the whole passage is applied directly to the second coming of our Lord in the general judgment. The four points, which correspond to those of the third sermon, are the wrath of the Judge, the sentence of the damned, the fire of hell, and the ‘gentle whisper,’ which invites the good to glory. As Zacharias says, *Sibilabo eis, quia redemi eos*.¹ ‘Then, as Isidore says, the saints will know more fully what good grace has conferred upon them, and what they would have come to if the mercy of God had not chosen them of His free bounty, and how true it is that is said in the Psalms, “Mercy and judgment will I sing to Thee, O Lord.” This is most certainly

¹ Zac. x. 8.

to be known, that no one will be delivered save by undeserved mercy, and no one will be condemned save by deserved judgment. Let us keep ourselves, then, dearest, from the strong wind of pride, and the earthquake of avarice and anger, from the fire of luxury and gluttony, in which the Lord is not, and let us be humbled in the gentle-whisper of confession and self-accusation, of meekness and peace, because therein is the Lord, so that in the Day of Judgment we may be worthy to hear the words, "Come, ye blessed," by His gift, Who is blessed for evermore. Amen.'

The above is a specimen, not indeed of the sermons of St. Antony as they fell on the ears of the multitudes who listened to him, but of the lines of thought which he would follow, one at one time, another at another, when he was preaching on the particular mystery which furnishes him with his subject in this instance. Any one acquainted with the rich stores of Christian pulpit literature will see at once how many of what certain writers call '*conceptus prædicabiles*' are contained in the slight outline which we have given. The moral purpose predominates throughout, and to this all the allegorical and mystical interpretations which are so freely used are made subservient. It is obvious also to remark how much the great use which

St. Antony makes of Sacred Scripture, especially of the Old Testament, implies as to the knowledge of the sacred text, and not merely of the substance of Scripture, which must have been possessed by the audiences to which such sermons were addressed. We may very freely concede to the better Protestants of our own time and country a general acquaintance with the text of Scripture, which is one of their best possessions. But it may be doubted whether any modern preacher, either Catholic or Protestant, would be followed in Scriptural allusions and quotations so frequent and so familiar as those made by St. Antony. And it is certain that the majority of the sermons of our own time are very unlike in this respect to those which he must have preached in Italy, long before the invention of printing, and when the possession of a copy of the Bible must have been as difficult to ordinary Christians as that of a complete copy of St. Augustine or St. Chrysostom is to us.

It can only be by the careful study of St. Antony's sermons in the way which is here pointed out that any fair idea can be formed of the position which he occupied in the eyes of his contemporaries. Such a study may at least enable us to understand the solid foundation of learning and of argumentative power which lay at the bottom of his success, although that

success was mainly due, not to learning or argumentative power, but to the grace of the Apostolate and Doctorate which he received from on high, and the many very marvellous gifts by which that grace was accompanied and supplemented. It was especially and above all as a preacher that St. Antony was distinguished. This, beyond all others, was the work assigned to him in the order of God's Providence, and it was by this that he gained his most glorious victories over the enemy of souls, and laid so many conquests at his Master's feet. His external miracles, wonderful as they were, were by no means so numerous as in the case of other saints, such as St. Francis Xavier, St. Vincent Ferrer, and others; indeed, it is said by the writer of one ancient manuscript that during his lifetime he was not celebrated for working external miracles. But these words must certainly be taken relatively, and are rather a witness to the frequency of such miracles in the lives of other great servants of God than anything else. If, we may say, they were not numerous enough to be considered a distinguishing characteristic of St. Antony, how frequent, how habitual indeed, must they have been with other saints, such, for example, as the two we have mentioned? We have seen that he often avoided the occasions of working miracles, and generally concealed or sought to conceal those

which he did work, sometimes by exacting a promise of secrecy from the persons benefited, sometimes by ascribing the favour granted entirely to their faith and prayers. The most brilliant of his miracles, if we may use the expression, those which were worked publicly, and with circumstances which called attention to them, so to speak, were in defence of some great truth, as in the case of the mule of Bonvillo, or for the discomfiture and conversion of heretics, such as the eating of the poisoned meat, on the changing of the fowl into a fish, and the preaching to the fishes of the Adriatic: while, as to the two loveliest incidents recorded in St. Antony's life, we owe the knowledge of one to the fortunate eaves-dropping of the good Count Tiso di Camposampiero, and the other he himself made known because (can it be doubted?) it was so signal a witness to the glorious mystery of his Blessed Mother's Assumption into heaven.

We know, on the authority of Antony's devoted companion, Blessed Luca Belludi, that he frequently worked miracles at his request, which he acknowledges that he sometimes urged in order to be rid of the importunity of those who appealed to him. How many of these must have been worked in behalf of poor and obscure persons, in the quiet, unnoticed way which he was so fond of, which were

never heard of beyond the poor cottage or secluded hamlet in which they took place!

There is one more remark to be made with regard to the expression of the manuscript in question. There can be little doubt that when the writer says that St. Antony's external miracles were not celebrated 'in his lifetime,' he is contrasting that period with the years following his death, during which the miracles wrought at his tomb and by his intercession were more numerous, perhaps, than in the case of any other saint, so that to this day he is commonly called 'the worker of miracles.' As though God rewarded the humility of His servant both by concealing his gifts while he lived, and revealing them after his death.

We have already seen that St. Antony's preaching was in itself miraculous, both from his gift of tongues and the wonderful way in which his voice was heard at great distances. There was another marvellous power commonly exercised by him in the pulpit, the prophetic insight by which he saw what would happen to his hearers (as in the case of the twenty-two robbers), and the illumination enabling him to divine the peculiar temptations, sins, or needs of every individual person he addressed. First one, then another, would be cut to the heart by what seemed 'a shaft at random sent,' or feel his soul stirred to its very

depths by some apparently chance allusion showing a knowledge of facts and circumstances, which were a secret between God and his conscience. Again and again, at such times, persons would burst into irrepressible weeping, and 'knowing what was done in them fell down before him, and told him all the truth.'

We have seen how, when Antony was preaching his last Lent in Padua, the inhabitants left their shops and offices, and the country people for miles round their work, to hear him. Yet there was never an instance known of a robbery committed or an accident occurring in any of the houses thus left, as they often were, empty and unprotected, nor of a thief mixing with the densely-packed crowds who were listening to him; and this fact, which would be remarkable in modern times, is doubly so in the lawless and distracted condition of Italy and France in the thirteenth century. Never, we are told, was he interrupted, even when preaching out of doors, by the barking of dogs or the crying of children, or by any sudden occurrence, except when such an interruption was to be an opportunity for a miracle, as in the case of the poor madman, or when the malignity of the devil was put forth and baffled, as in the case of the courier with the letter, and of the platform which was broken down. Neither did the sobs and

tears into which his penitent hearers continually broke, ever disturb the preacher or prevent his being perfectly audible. Sometimes, we read, the whole audience would be swayed by the fervent appeals of Antony, and in the universal excitement exclamations would be heard on all sides—‘Ah, woe is me; I have done that very thing of which the holy friar is speaking!’ ‘Alas! never would I have done so, if I had known it was so grievous a sin.’ Persons would turn to their neighbours, weeping, and each exhort the other to go to confession, to make such a pilgrimage or do such a pious work, to fast on such and such days in honour of the Madonna; and through it all the voice of the preacher was as clearly heard by all as though the dead silence which always greeted his first appearance had lasted unbroken through the sermon. We cannot help quoting the description of one writer: ‘The people crowded from all parts, yet never was there any noise of so many pressing and jostling each other: there was no sign of levity, no laughing, nor talking, nor crying of children: every one had his eyes fixed on the man of God, and his ears strained to hearken, without any weariness, nay, with the deepest devotion, as though they were listening, not to a man, but to an angel from heaven. In truth, such grace did God impart to him, that he spoke with most eloquent tongue and

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thrilling voice, like the note of a ringing trumpet, so that he was perfectly heard and understood by all.'

Neither were the results of Antony's private exhortations less wonderful. Once again let us hear an author of the time: 'There were very many persons who, in the lifetime of the man of God, came to the friars, solemnly affirming that while they lay in bed he had appeared to them, saying: 'Rise, Martin, or Agnes,' or whatever the name might be; 'and go to such a father to confess this or that sin, which you committed at such a time, and in such a place and circumstances. And these were known to none save God.'

It is much to be regretted that there are no accounts extant of the conversions of individual heretics which were effected in such vast numbers by St. Antony. This was, as we know, his great and favourite work; and such was his knowledge of the Scriptures and his power of applying them, his force of reasoning and power of language, that Surio says: 'In his presence no heretic ever dared to open his mouth in defence of his errors. Wonderfully did he unmask their malice and perfidy, and prevent or repel their assaults. . . . Many were the heretics and favourers of heresy whom he brought back to the Faith and to the allegiance of the Holy See.' We can fancy few things more interesting and instructive

than the story of these conversions would have been ; but those were too turbulent times for such spiritual annals, and we only know in general that, like St. Francis Xavier and Blessed Peter Favre, his method was to win the heart by his sweetness before breaking down the pride of intellect as the ‘hammer of the heretics,’ making himself all things to all men, mixing with them, accepting their invitations, and repaying their treacherous plots by miracles of love. So, too, in his sermons, he was without mercy for heresy and sin, but full of tenderness for the sinner.

There is one instance on record in which supernatural effects were experienced by St. Antony himself while listening to a preacher who is supposed with good reason to have been the holy Benedictine abbot, Blessed Giordano Forzatè, who founded a double monastery of St. Benedict in Padua. God had made known to him that it was His will that he should devote himself to preaching. When Antony was in Padua, he was very old, and could do so but very rarely. On this occasion he was speaking on some words of St. Paul when our Saint was so filled with spiritual sweetness and consolation, that he fell into an ecstasy which lasted a long time, as was seen by all present.

CHAPTER V.

The Last Month of Life.

ANTONY's extraordinary labours had told greatly on his enfeebled health, and soon after Easter he began to think of suspending his preaching for a time and retiring to some quiet place for rest and contemplation. He had another reason for this resolution. The devotion of the country people round Padua had increased rather than fallen off, and they crowded to hear him to the neglect of their necessary work in the fields and vineyards. It would be better for him to go away now for a time and resume his labours after harvest, if he should live so long.

The extraordinary faculties granted to him at the General Chapter, and confirmed by the Pope, gave him perfect liberty in this matter, and he was free to go when and where he pleased; but as Antony would not, when he was Provincial, leave Padua for Lisbon, even though divinely inspired to do so, without first asking leave of the Father Guardian in whose monastery he was living, so now, too, he would not

use the liberty he possessed, but wrote to consult his Provincial and ask his permission to absent himself for a time. Antony wrote his letter and, leaving it on the table, went to ask the Father Guardian to despatch it by a messenger. When the man was found the Saint returned to his cell for the letter, but it was nowhere to be seen. Antony took this for a sign that his proposed departure would not be according to the will of God, and quietly told the Superior that he had altered his mind and did not require the messenger. In a few days, at the end of the time in which a letter could have been delivered and a reply returned, the answer giving the desired permission lay on his table. An angel had been the messenger.

He left Padua immediately after Whit Tuesday, May 13, and went as secretly as possible to Camposampiero, where his old friend Count Tiso had built a hermitage or house of retirement for the Friars Minor, which he supported himself. Tiso was full of joy at the meeting with Antony; their mutual affection had been strengthened in the intimacy of the time when the Saint was his guest in Padua, and there was between them the holy secret of the visit of the Infant Jesus to his servant, as well as the tie of gratitude for the liberation of the little Count William from the hands of the tyrant Ezzelino. Tiso would

fain have received Antony into his palace, but this could not be expected when the poor hermitage of the friars was so near. Close to the entrance grew a very large walnut-tree, and Antony at once formed the idea of living there during his time of retreat, lifted up above all intercourse with men, and with no companions but the birds, the 'little sisters' of his beloved St. Francis. Count Tiso insisted on himself making a cell in the tree for his friend: he twisted the boughs together and roofed it with thatch, and two little huts were prepared near it for the two friars, Luca and Ruggiero, who came with him. Even in this seclusion his charity to his neighbour did not allow Antony an uninterrupted time of rest and communion with God, for he continued to write his sermons and often preached to the people who from time to time, sought him in his solitude.

For some time the friends of Count Ricciardo San Bonifazio had been using every means to procure his release from the prison where he had been thrown the year before by Ezzelino. As a last resource the citizens of Padua appealed to Antony to appear once more before the tyrant and try to induce him to perform an act of justice which would incline to peace great numbers who were now exasperated by the aggressions of the Ghibelline party. Ill as he was Antony could not resist an appeal from the Padovani

in behalf of a prisoner, and with much pain and suffering accomplished the journey to Verona, where Ezzelino then was. It was a fruitless effort as regards the release of Ricciardo. Ezzelino received his visitor with every mark of respect, but pretended that reasons of state absolutely prevented him from granting his request, and Antony returned to Camposampiero.

He grew rapidly worse on the way from Verona, and he is said to have had a revelation of his approaching death, and of the glory which he was to enjoy both in heaven and on earth. On reaching a hill which commands a view of the plain in which Padua stands, he greeted the city in loving words and gave it his blessing. Then, turning to Luca Belludi, 'Great,' he said, 'shall be the glory with which this spot is to be favoured and adorned.' He did not explain the meaning of his prophecy, which afterwards was made very clear when the chief scene of his apostolate and the place where his holy relics lay became famous throughout the world, and gave its name to the stranger-saint who had loved it so well, and at whose shrine, as age succeeded age, such wonderful miracles were to be wrought.

Very weary in body, and with a soul longing for the moment of eternal union with his God, Antony reached Camposampiero. Once every day he came down from his cell in the tree to dine with his

brethren. But a length there came a day when he fainted as he sat at table. At first the friars thought he was in one of the ecstasies which were now frequent with him, but when the truth was evident they raised him in their arms and laid him on a bed of vine-shoots. Knowing that the end was near, he spoke some words of comfort to the weeping friars, and begged Fra Ruggiero to have him removed to Sta. Maria Maggiore, and thus relieve the religious of Camposampiero. They all told him, with many tears, that to have him with them was their greatest joy and consolation; but they knew that what he said and did was inspired by God, and they were ready to obey him in all things. A peasant was asked to lend his cart, and laying the dying Saint on it as well as they could they set out in sad procession for Padua. On the way they met two friars who, grieving greatly to see his suffering state, implored him not to go to Sta. Maria Maggiore, where he would certainly be disturbed and fatigued by the visits of his friends and penitents, but to allow himself to be taken to Arcella, where, as we know, there was a little house occupied by the friars who served the convent of Franciscan nuns. There was only just time; his brethren lifted him in their arms and placed him sitting in a chair, as the water, rising to his chest, prevented his lying down. He made his last con-

fession, recited the Seven Penitential Psalms with his brethren, and then sang, all by himself, his favourite hymn—

O Gloriosa Domina
Excelsa super sydera,
Qui te creavit provide
Lactasti sacro ubere.

Quod Eva tristis abstulit,
Tu reddis almo germine,
Intrent ut astra flebiles,
Cœli fenestra facta es.

Tu regis alti janua,
Et porta lucis fulgida.
Vitam datam per Virginem
Gentes redemptæ, plaudite.

Gloria tibi, Domine,
Qui natus es de Virgine,
Cum Patre et Sancto Spiritu
In sempiterna sæcula.

When he had finished it he lifted his eyes to heaven and kept them fixed there, while his whole face beamed with a light and brightness strange to see in a dying man. Fra Ruggiero, who was supporting him in his arms, asked him what he saw, and he answered very clearly, 'I see my God.' After a while he spoke a few words of consolation to those around him, and then begged to be anointed: 'I have that unction within me,' he said, 'but let me have it outwardly too.' His soul was bathed and anointed by the Holy Spirit with His own oil of gladness, but not the less did he desire that sacra-

mental unction which is the solace of every dying Christian. Then followed half an hour of such peaceful concentration and rest in God that it could not be called agony; and calmly, as though he were sleeping, he gave up his blessed soul into the hands of his Father.

It was on a Friday evening, the 13th of June, 1231, that Antony's short life of not quite thirty-six years ended. His portrait is drawn by contemporary authors, who tell us that he was rather below the middle height, and looked very much younger than he was. He had the olive complexion of his countrymen, brilliant eyes, and a countenance of remarkable sweetness and cheerfulness. He was never known to laugh, but there was nothing austere in his gravity; on the contrary, his look was so bright and open that all who saw him felt strangely drawn to love him. His life of labour and mortification had worn and wasted him, so that his complexion had become like parchment, and his features drawn and sharpened; but no sooner was he dead than his hands and face became wonderfully white, and he looked so beautiful that all who saw him felt as though they were gazing on a glorified body, while every limb continued perfectly flexible the whole time he was unburied.

That same evening, as Don Thomas, the Abbot of St. Andrew's at Vercelli, was sitting in his room,

his old scholar Antony came in and said to him, 'See, Father Abbot, I have left my little ass near Padua and am going in haste to my own country ;' and so saying he passed his hand under his chin, caressingly, and cured him of an affection of the throat from which he was suffering. As he disappeared through the door the Abbot hastily followed him to beg him not to be in so great a hurry to depart. But he saw nothing of him, and the persons who were in the ante-chamber into which Antony had seemed to pass declared that no one had entered it. Don Thomas sent to the monastery of the Friars Minor, inquiring whether he had been there, and when he heard that nothing had been seen of his beloved scholar and friend he felt sure of what was soon proved by news from Padua, that Antony had alluded to his mortal remains which he had just left at Arcella, and that Paradise, not Portugal, was the country to which he was bound.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

THE REWARD OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT.

CHAPTER I.

The Funeral of St. Antony.

ANTONY had died, as has been already said, almost suddenly, and in a spot to which he had been carried as it were by chance. The convent of Arcella was inhabited by nuns of the enclosed Order, which St. Francis had founded with the aid of St. Clare ; it was small and in an exposed situation, at a distance outside the walls of the city, and there were there but a few friars whose duty it was to say Mass and act as chaplains to the nuns. Their own instincts, and their knowledge of the veneration in which Antony was held, which was certain to show itself in the form of great enthusiasm and excitement now that he was gone, made them fear some tumult, such as actually followed, and they determined to conceal Antony's death for the present, till measures could be taken for preventing the confusion and possible mischief which might result from the rush of people who would certainly force their way in as soon as the truth was known.

Their idea was to keep things quiet, and to convey the holy body secretly by night to Sta. Maria Maggiore, in Padua. But it was the will of God that these precautions should not succeed, and that the death of this great Saint should be made known immediately and miraculously. Suddenly there were heard the voices of children, who formed themselves into parties all through the city, and went about weeping and crying aloud: 'Our Father, St. Antony, is dead!' Startled and terrified, the people of Padua, who knew nothing of the sudden turn taken by his illness, nor of his removal from Camposampiero to Arcella, hastened thither with all speed.

Then followed one of those scenes of curious confusion, which can only be explained by the strong faith of an otherwise undisciplined people. The nuns and friars at Arcella were bent on keeping the treasure they possessed, and broke off in the midst of their lamentations for their loss to plan how they might do so. One of the most spirited of the sisters suggested an immediate petition to the nobles and influential persons for their support and sanction in begging the community of Sta. Maria Maggiore to leave the body of St. Antony with them. The proposal was approved by all, and a deputation of the friars was immediately sent to Padua. They were favourably received by many of the principal persons

in the city, who promised to do all they could to forward the wishes of the nuns. Foremost among those who offered their assistance were the noble families inhabiting the quarter called Capodiponte, on the north side of Padua, which was that nearest to Arcella. These good people of Capodiponte despatched their youngest and strongest men to form a guard round the little monastery. But by this time a vast crowd had assembled outside, filling the air with sobs and lamentations, and exclaiming, 'Whither have you gone, loving Father of Padua? Have you really gone away, and left behind the children who repented and were born again to Christ through you? Where shall we find another to preach to us, orphans, with such patience and charity?'

With the crowd came the friars from Sta. Maria to convey the sacred remains to their church. They asserted, with good reason, that the Saint had always especially loved their monastery, and that when he felt his last hour approaching, he had expressly desired to be carried thither. The Capodiponte men, however, had the right of the strongest, and replied by doubling the guard. Then the friars appealed to the bishop, who summoned his canons and clergy, laid the case before them, and asked their opinion. The sisters of Arcella had secured some advocates among them, but the friars had the majority of the

clergy and the bishop on their side. The question was decided in favour of the church of Sta. Maria Maggiore. Still the determined men of Capodiponte remained quite unmoved. They got their partisans in Padua to join them, and vowed that they would die at their post rather than allow the body to be removed. The more reasonable of them at length consented to wait quietly for the arrival of the Provincial. Night came on, and the gates of Arcella were locked and barred. The people, determined to get in, three times broke the bars and drove away the guards. But no sooner had they done this, than they were struck blind and helpless, and stood without groping and unable to move. From the first dawn of day people began to press into the monastery to touch, or at least to look upon the Saint, and those who were unable to get in fastened rings, girdles, collars, and other such things, on long poles, which they pushed through doors and windows to be laid for a moment on the sacred body.

The friars began to fear that the great heat of the weather would make the body decompose before the Provincial arrived, and so placed it in a case and put it underground. Hardly had they done so when some one cried out that the body had been removed, and the excited multitude attacked the friars with knives and sticks in their cells, and were only satisfied

when the earth was removed and the sacred body shown to be still there.

At length the Provincial appeared. He skilfully appeased the unmanageable men of Capodiponte by appointing them guardians of the monastery where the Saint's body lay. He insisted on the authorities protecting his religious from being insulted or annoyed, and next day appeared at a general meeting of all the clergy which was called by the bishop to discuss once more the claims of the friars of Sta. Maria Maggiore. The matter was decided by the Provincial, who represented that there was no doubt that Antony had wished to be buried there, and that it rested with him, as his Superior, to grant that wish : he therefore respectfully claimed the body of the Saint as belonging to him. The bishop then gave sentence that it should be done as the Provincial desired, bade the clergy assemble at Arcella, the following day, and requested the Podestà also to be present, for the removal of the sacred body to the church of Sta. Maria. It was thought well to make a bridge of boats across the river, so as to avoid passing through Capodiponte, but the people of that quarter destroyed the bridge as soon as it was made. The whole city was in commotion, and the outrage was regarded as a reproach to all Padua and an insult to their beloved Saint. The poor nuns, whose petition

had been the spark which had kindled the fire, were now full of distress, and expressed their perfect willingness that the body should be removed. Some rioters were taken into custody, and peace was restored.

On the 18th of June, the fifth day after the Saint's death, the body was solemnly conveyed from Arcella to Sta. Maria, in the presence of the bishop and clergy, the civil authorities of Padua, and a vast crowd of the inhabitants. It was more like a triumph than a funeral. The noblest of the Padovani took it in turns to carry the bier. Those who followed it carried lighted candles, and the road was lined the whole way with hundreds of mourners bewailing their loss, yet rejoicing in the honours paid to their dear Saint. The bier was brought into the church of Sta. Maria, where pontifical Mass was celebrated by the bishop, and after the usual rites the body was laid in a marble shrine supported on four columns which had been marvellously discovered.¹ Then there burst out, as it were, a great blaze of miraculous power, the blind, the deaf, the maimed, the sick, were healed instantly on touching the shrine: and even others who could not get into the church for the crowd, were cured, outside the walls, in the presence of the multitude.

¹ This shrine now contains the body of Blessed Luca Belludi.

CHAPTER II.

Canonization.

THERE is no reason for doubting that the wonderful outburst of devotion to St. Antony which followed immediately on his funeral was directly produced by the multitude and splendour of the miracles wrought by his intercession. Padua became at once the scene of one pious procession after another. The first to pay this homage to the Saint were the inhabitants of Capodiponte, the very people whose ill-regulated zeal and tumultuous proceedings at Arcella have been already mentioned. They now came with deep compunction and fervent devotion, noble knights and ladies, barefoot, and with every mark of penitence and humility, to kneel, the first of thousands of pilgrims, at St. Antony's tomb. The procession was headed by the parochial clergy, also barefoot, and carrying the cross and banners; at a little distance from the church it was met by the community of Sta. Maria, eager to welcome their former adversaries with every demonstration of affection and respect.

The example of Capodiponte was followed by all classes, and not a day passed for some time without its special appointed procession visiting the tomb, and bringing to it their prayers and gifts and votive offerings. One day the bishop and his clergy came, on another the religious orders of the city, then those of all the diocese; and one of the most edifying processions must have been that of the professors and students of the University, who walked barefoot, and singing litanies, to implore the intercession of the Saint. They brought as an offering a candle of such an enormous size, that a large piece had to be cut off before it could be set up in the church. This became a favourite devotion. Some of the candles were so large that it took sixteen men to carry one, and others were brought on carts. Some were decorated in the most artistic way with the richest ornamentation of lilies, grapes, and leaves, all wrought in wax, and we even read of branched candlesticks to hold these enormous candles, formed of the same material. The people watched round the Church in parties which relieved each other at stated times, and all this went on without diminution through summer's heat and winter's cold, procession following procession by day and by night, singing hymns to the glory of God who had so honoured His servant. The fame of these devotions and of the continual miracles

which attended them spread rapidly, and not Italy only, but Hungary and Germany soon sent their contingents of pilgrims, while the confessionals were besieged by penitents. It was said that those who presented themselves to be healed of their bodily infirmities whilst their souls were stained with sin, received no benefit, but that when they returned, after confession and absolution, they obtained the graces they sought.

The day on which the body of the Saint was brought into Padua was a Tuesday ; and it is a well-attested fact that in no single instance did any sufferer who invoked his aid on that day fail to be cured. From that time Tuesday has been especially dedicated to him. Many remarkable cases are on record of signal graces granted to persons who particularly venerated St. Antony on that day ; and it has become a custom among those devout to him to honour him during nine successive Tuesdays.

The unexampled rapidity with which the worship of the Saint had been established, and the number of miracles continually wrought at his tomb, inspired the inhabitants of Padua with the strongest desire that the whole Church of God should join in this worship, and share the blessings of his protection. A month had not passed since Antony's death, before a deputation was sent to Rome, representing the

bishop, clergy, authorities, and all the citizens of Padua, praying earnestly that the process of his canonization might be begun. The late events in that city were known at Rome, and we may imagine how gladly Pope Gregory would receive such a petition. He appointed the Bishop of Padua, Giordano Forzatè the Prior of St. Benedict's, and Fra Giovanni da Vicenza, Prior of St. Augustine's, of the Order of St. Dominic, to examine into the miracles and draw up the process. The deputation returned to Padua, and the cause was immediately begun. When completed, two more petitions were addressed to the Holy See praying that Antony might be inscribed in the calendar of the saints: the bishop and chapter, the Friars Minor, the civil authorities, all sent representatives; and the professors and students of the University wrote a separate letter to the Pope on their own account, attesting that they had been eye-witnesses of numerous miracles worked by the Saint. The petitions were strengthened by the recommendation of two powerful persons, Odo, Cardinal of Montferrat, and Jacopo, Bishop elect of Palestina, both legates Apostolic in the Marches of Treviso, who, being in Padua at the time, were deeply impressed with the honour paid to the Saint, and the miracles worked at his tomb.

It was determined in Consistory that the revision

of the process and the examination of the miracles should be committed to the Cardinal Bishop of Sabina, and matters seemed advancing favourably when an unexpected difficulty arose. Some of the most learned and venerable of the Cardinals disapproved of the canonization of the servant of God before a year had elapsed from the time of his death, and they absolutely refused to agree to it. But this hesitation on their part issued in the greater glory of St. Antony, God Himself interposing to remove all doubt from their minds. In a dream, one of these Cardinals saw the ceremony of the consecration of a church and an altar: the Pope and the Cardinals—himself among them—were present. When the proper time arrived, the Pope asked for the relics which were to be placed, as usual, under the altar: all the Cardinals replied that there were none. Then he looked round, and saw lying on one side the body of a person lately dead, wrapped in grave-clothes. ‘There are the relics,’ said the Pope; ‘bring them to me.’ But the Cardinals replied that they were not relics. ‘Let us see, then,’ said the Pope; and uncovering the body, it was found to be incorrupt and fragrant, and every one present eagerly strove to provide himself with a portion of these new relics. The Cardinal awoke, and told his dream to the others. As he was leaving his house to go to the Pope, he met

the Ambassadors of Padua, and turning to his companions, exclaimed: 'This is our dream and its interpretation.'

The dissentient Cardinals being now warm advocates of the cause, things went on without further hindrance, and on the Feast of Pentecost, which fell on the 30th of May, 1232, the canonization took place.

The Roman Court was then residing at Spoleto, and it was in the Cathedral of that city that the function was performed. There, with hands and eyes raised to heaven, and his face beaming with joy and thankfulness, Pope Gregory IX. declared that, to the honour and praise of the Most Holy Trinity, and the greater exaltation of the Catholic Church, he inscribed the blessed Father Antony in the Catalogue of the Saints, and ordered that the 13th of June should be celebrated throughout the world as his feast.

At the moment when the Holy Father pronounced this sentence, all the church bells in Lisbon began ringing of themselves, to the great wonder of the inhabitants; who, however, the writers of the time say, were immediately after conscious of a mysterious thrill of gladness which prepared them for some happy event which was thus miraculously announced. The old traditions of the city say that Antony's mother was still living, and that she enjoyed the happiness of worshipping her son on the altars of

the Church before rejoining him in heaven. His father seems to have been dead. Several members of his family are known to have been alive, among them an aunt who was one of the Regular Canonesses of Coimbra, and who had so strong a devotion to her nephew that it became a common saying that to obtain a favour of St. Antony it was a sure way to get his aunt to ask for it.

On the return of the Ambassadors to Padua with their welcome tidings, the first thought of all the citizens was to prepare for the celebration of the first feast of their beloved Saint, which was so close at hand. That thirteenth of June was a happy day for the good Padovani, who must often have thought of his farewell blessing to the city he loved so well, and of his prophecy of its future glory, the fulfilment of which was even then beginning.¹ But he had also often foretold that a time of trial and disaster was in store, and six years after his death the storm burst over Padua. The Emperor Frederic II. was greatly incensed by the revolt of most of the Italian cities from which he claimed allegiance, and in 1237 prepared to lead a powerful army from Germany to punish and reduce them to obedience. Ezzelino da Romano

¹ Four years later it was decreed that all the shops should be shut in Padua on the feast of St. Antony, as on Sundays and feasts of our Lord and the Blessed Virgin.

saw the opportunity for advancing his own ambitious designs, and, masking them under a pretended zeal for the imperial cause, he met the Emperor at Augsburg, and suggested his crossing the Alps and attacking the cities of Lombardy, while he himself should lead his troops against those in the March of Treviso. Frederic agreed, and Ezzelino at once fell upon Padua, always the object of his desires, asserting, indeed, that his only object was to punish the Guelph party, and reduce them to obedience to the Emperor, but in reality with very distinct views of usurpation. In a few months he was master of the place, which he treated with that savage ferocity that earned him the title of 'tyrant of Padua.' The details of his cruelty do not fall within our province; they remind us of the worst horrors of Imperial Rome, and many of them would be incredible if they did not rest on undoubted authority. It was calculated that he had twelve thousand persons killed, many of them by fearful tortures, in Padua, and more than thirty thousand throughout the March. The priests were indefatigable in consoling and encouraging the victims of his tyranny, and the Friars Minor were foremost in the good work. Ezzelino punished them by imprisonment or banishment, one notable exception being Fra Luca Belludi, St. Antony's devoted friend and companion.

Day and night the Padovani knelt at the shrine of their Saint, and implored him to save his city and punish the oppressor, and none prayed more fervently than Fra Luca and another holy friar of the Order, named Bartolomeo Corradini, who, according to some accounts, was at this time Guardian of Sta. Maria Maggiore. One night, as he was praying at St. Antony's shrine, he distinctly heard a voice proceed from it, saying: 'Fear nothing, Fra Bartolomeo; be comforted and give thanks to God, for I promise you that on the octave of my feast this city shall be delivered from her oppressor.'

Meanwhile, Pope Alexander IV. had despatched his legate to Venice to urge the Signoria to join the forces of the Republic with his, and march against Ezzelino's nephew and lieutenant, Ansidisio. The combined armies attacked and completely defeated him at the gates of Padua on the 20th of June, the Octave of St. Antony's Feast, which fell that year on a Tuesday. Ezzelino died a miserable and hopeless death three years afterwards.

CHAPTER III.

The Protector of Padua.

THE body of St. Antony remained in the marble shrine in the Church of Sta. Maria Maggiore till the year 1263, when it was translated by St. Bonaventure to the high altar of the new church built by the Friars Minor in his honour. The Seraphic Doctor, who was then Master of Theology in the University of Paris and General of the Order, had come to Padua to visit the shrine of St. Antony, and he made the translation in order to promote an increase of devotion to him. On opening the shrine the bones were found to be disjointed, and the flesh was a mass of dust; but the skin of the head, the hair and teeth, were perfect, and the tongue was incorrupt and of the natural colour. St. Bonaventure reverently removed it, and kissing it devoutly, exclaimed in a transport of devotion: ‘O blessed tongue, which always didst bless the Lord, and cause others to bless Him, now does it appear plainly how highly thou wert esteemed by God!’ He then commanded

it to be placed by itself in a separate reliquary of great value and beauty.

Before going on to the second translation, it may be well to relate in this place a very beautiful anecdote in honour of this precious relic. Father Ignatius Martini, a Portuguese Jesuit, in the seventeenth century, before returning from Italy to his native country, visited Padua to venerate the relics of St. Antony. He was a celebrated and very popular preacher. The admiration which his eloquence excited had so intoxicated him that, instead of applying himself to excite a hatred of vice and love of virtue in his hearers, his main study was to gratify them and to gain applause for himself by his grace of language and manner. But no sooner had his lips touched the reliquary containing St. Antony's tongue, than he felt his soul suddenly and deeply smitten with compunction for the vain use which he had made of his own tongue, and then and there, kissing the relic again and again, and bathing it with his tears, he vowed that thenceforward that blessed tongue by which so much glory had been rendered to God in the conversions which its words had effected, should be the model by which his own should be regulated. On reaching Lisbon, he gave himself up to the lowly office of teaching the Christian doctrine to children, whom he was in the habit of going

about to collect together, with a little cane in his hand. At first the task inspired him with such repugnance and so keen a sense of humiliation, that his hand trembled till he could scarcely hold the cane, and while teaching his rude class of poor ignorant children he was haunted by the remembrance of the days when he preached before the Portuguese Court, and the noble and learned hung upon his eloquent words. But he persevered; and before long the progress made by his scholars was so wonderful that not children only, but grown persons crowded to his catechizing, and numerous conversions were the fruit of his labours. In order to win the people from the practice of singing songs offensive to Christian modesty, he used to compose sacred canticles, which he distributed on all sides, and God was pleased to show how pleasing this pious industry was to Him, by sending an Angel to tell him with what words to finish one of his verses. When he was dying he begged that his catechist's cane might be buried with him. This was done; and many years after, the cane and the hand which held it were found to be incorrupt, and the King and all his Court came to kiss them and to honour him as a saint.

In 1310 a second translation to a chapel which had been built for the express purpose was made, on

the octave of the Saint, when the Friars Minor were holding their General Chapter in Padua.

This chapel, however, did not satisfy the devotion of the friars, and they took measures for the building of one far surpassing it in magnificence, and hither the relics of the Saint were solemnly translated in 1350, by Guy of Montfort, Cardinal of St. Cecilia and Apostolic Legate, whose life had been preserved by St. Antony's intercession, and who made a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to his shrine. The new chapel was just completed, and to give additional solemnity to the ceremony, the Archbishop of Aquileia summoned a provincial synod at Padua. The function took place on the 15th of February. The relics were inclosed in a silver urn, which was the offering of the Cardinal Legate, and placed in the marble shrine on which the altar rests. Besides the incorrupt tongue of the Saint, a great many separate bones, including those removed by St. Bonaventure in extracting it, were placed by the Cardinal in different reliquaries, which were kept in the sacristy till the 20th of June, 1745, when they were all solemnly translated to the chapel where they are now venerated, by Cardinal Rezzonico, then Bishop of Padua, and afterwards Pope Clement XIII.

By a decree of the General Chapter held at Lyons in 1351, the 15th of February was appointed to

be kept throughout the Order in commemoration of the translation made by St. Bonaventure, to which the others were afterwards added. The sanctuary in which the relics of St. Antony repose, indeed his church also, and all things associated with him are very dear to the Padovani. When the fire of 1749, which has been mentioned, occurred, although the altar of the Saint was quite uninjured, yet the grief of the citizens was intense. Every one felt it as a personal affliction, and all classes vied with each other in contributing to the restoration of the church.

When the flames were raging fiercely, crowds of persons were seen, heedless of their danger, climbing on the roof, and walking in the burning building; often blazing beams fell upon them, or they themselves fell among the scorching ashes, and yet in no single instance was any one hurt. Well and lovingly did the dear Saint of Padua return the fearless affection of his 'divoti:' they were busying themselves with trying to save his church, and he was busied in protecting their lives.

Many instances might be given of the singular and special protection with which this great Saint has repeatedly favoured his devout clients. We give one, both because it is very remarkable in itself, and because it is an illustration of the point we are

speaking of—the rich return St. Antony makes for the faithful devotion of his much loved city.

In the August of 1756 Italy was visited by a terrible storm of wind, which burst over Padua at mid-day, and besides doing a great deal of damage elsewhere, carried off the thick leaden roof of the City Hall, perhaps one of the largest buildings in Europe. The hall was full of people, yet the falling masses injured no one either there or in the adjoining squares. What proves the safety of so many persons to have been miraculous, is that an enormous piece of the roof descended slowly into the hall, where it remained propped against one of the walls, as though it had been placed there by some unseen hand.

Cardinal Rezzonico, who had so magnificently displayed his gratitude to St. Antony, now joined with him in care for the city of his predilection. His alms were profuse, and blessings were poured upon him by the religious communities and the poor of Padua, whom he assisted in immense numbers. For three successive days he walked at the head of a procession to the altar of the Saint, and there celebrated Mass in thanksgiving for the wonderful deliverance of the city. It was resolved, to commemorate the mercy of God on this occasion, that on every anniversary of the event the Blessed Sacra-

ment should be exposed for adoration till evening ; that at noon all the churches' bells should ring as on a festival, and that then the *Miserere*, the Litany of the Saints, and the *Te Deum* should be sung.

CHAPTER IV.

Miracles.

No age in the life of the Church is left destitute by the Providence of God of that witness of miraculous power which our Lord has so distinctly promised to her, though there are never wanting, on the other hand, men who profess to believe in Him and yet question the fulfilment of His promise, arguing, in order to shelter their own incredulity, on principles of reasoning which directly tend to contradict, not only the truth of His recorded words, but also the veracity of the whole Gospel history. Catholics are well aware that our own time forms no exception to the general rule, either as to the display of miraculous power on the part of God working through His Saints, or the counter display of scoffing contradiction on the part of unbelievers, and of unreasonable, though, happily, not scoffing, contradiction on the part of many who still claim to be Christians. It is indeed true that the belief in miracles, whether modern or ancient, is fast becom-

ing an acknowledged test by which the believers in Supernatural Revelation are to be distinguished from infidels, and we may hope that this truth may help to open the eyes of at least some of those excellent men who are so vainly trying to defend Christianity without acknowledging the Church and the permanence of her note of sanctity. Be that as it may, the present is no time for Catholics to hold back in the slightest degree from the full avowal of their belief in the miracles of the Saints. On the contrary, the truest wisdom and charity seem to require that the marvels of God's power and mercy should be proclaimed with even unusual loudness, and the continual faithfulness of our Lord to His promises vindicated more conspicuously, in proportion to the boldness and unreasonableness with which it is gainsayed.

It would, however, be utterly impossible to compress within any reasonable space an account of the miracles which are recorded as the fruit of the intercession of St. Antony of Padua. It has already been said that he has become famous, even among the most famous of the Saints, for mercies of this kind. It cannot be doubted that the splendour and number of his miracles, more than anything else, brought on him that singular honour of having been canonized within a year, so that the first anniversary

of his death was kept as the feast of a saint duly raised to the altars of the Church by the Supreme Pontiff. The *Chronicles of St. Francis* tell us that in the interval between his death and canonization as many as forty-five miracles were judicially proved, besides those which took place while he was alive. Of these forty-five two were instances in which the dead had been raised to life, and the number given is exclusive of a great number of cures of fever and the like, which seem not to have been considered, like the others, as miracles of the most difficult class. The *Chronicles* add a number of other miracles as having occurred subsequently to the canonization, among which is a beautiful anecdote of a nephew of the Saint, which shows us that his aunt was not the only member of his family who had great confidence in his intercession. One of his sisters was married in Lisbon, and had a child named Apparizio, who went out one day in a boat with some other boys, and was drowned, the boat having been capsized by a violent gust of wind. The child's body was found after some hours, and was then brought home. His mother would not allow it to be buried, and kept it with her till the third day, when the relations insisted on its burial, fearing that corruption had already begun. But she declared that they should never bury her child till

■

they buried her with him, and then she began to pray to her holy brother, vowing her son to him if he would obtain from God the restoration of his life. The child came to life again as soon as the vow was made, and afterwards fulfilled his mother's promise by entering the Franciscan Order, in which he lived and died holily.

Mention has already been made of the translation of the body of St. Antony in the time of St. Bonaventure, and as this translation took place little more than thirty years after the death of the Saint, it is a satisfactory proof that the devotion to him had been kept alive by a continual series of splendid miracles. St. Bonaventure is the author of the famous 'Responsory' of St. Antony which goes by the name of the 'miraculous Responsory,' and which is recited to the present day by those who invoke his intercession. It turns entirely on the various kinds of miracles for which the Saint was famous. The devout clients of St. Antony are accustomed to prefix to it the versicle and responsory of the Holy Ghost, *Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur, Et renovabis faciem terræ*, as well as those of our Lady, *Ora pro nobis Sancta Dei Genitrix, Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi*, to which is sometimes added the hymn, *O Gloriosa Domina*, as having been so favourite a devotion with St. Antony himself. Then is used the Responsory of

the Saint which, as has been said, is the work of St. Bonaventure, almost a contemporary—

Si quæris miracula,
Mors, error, calamitas,
Dæmon, lepra, fugiunt,
Ægri surgunt sani :

Cedunt mare, vincula,
Membra, resque perditas
Petunt et accipiunt
Juvenes et cani :

Pereunt pericula,
Cessat et necessitas,
Narrent hi qui sentiunt,
Dicant Paduani :

Cedunt mare, vincula, etc.
Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto,
Cedunt mare, vincula, etc.

The repetition of the stanza which begins *Cedunt mare, vincula*, is apparently the consequence of the numberless cases in which St. Antony has afforded a special aid in the recovery of what has been lost.¹

This Responsory certainly proves that in the time of St. Bonaventure, that is, in little more than a

¹ The Bollandists give another Responsory of St. Antony which is also attributed to St. Bonaventure, in which spiritual graces are chiefly sought—

O proles Hispaniæ, Pavor Infidelium,
Nova lux Italiæ, nobile depositum
Urbis Paduanæ :
Fer, Antoni, gratiæ Christi patrocinium :
Ne prolapsis veniæ tempus, breve creditum,
Defluat inane.

quarter of a century after his own death, St. Antony was already famous for wonderful miracles of all sorts, and that he was already well known in connection with the particular gift spoken of above. Nearly thirty folio pages of the Bollandist volume to which we have referred are filled with miracles of all kinds, which the writers have selected from various sources to illustrate this part of their work. Azevedo, the author who has been chiefly followed in the present work, devotes an entire book of four chapters to some of the miracles which have been selected by the Bollandists as most authentic. He classes them under the heads which are enumerated in the first Responsory of St. Bonaventure, and is thus able to give some idea of the universal range of this kind of evidence to the sanctity and mercifulness of St. Antony. We can only attempt the very briefest account of what is in itself only an epitome.

Under the head of 'death,' Azevedo gives about a dozen cases. One of these is the restoration to life of the nephew of St. Antony himself, which has been already mentioned. Another is a case in which a gentleman had obtained a son by prayer from St. Antony, making a vow to visit his tomb every year out of gratitude. One year when he was absent on this pilgrimage, his son was drowned with nine other boys in a mill course, from which the water

had been turned off and then suddenly let on again. The father returned soon after the accident, and was complaining to the Saint in an excess of grief, when the voices of the children were heard outside the door, and they all appeared unhurt. In two other cases the persons restored to life were princesses of Spain, whose mother had been inconsolable at their loss. In other cases wives whose husbands were jealous were saved from death. In others St. Antony appeared in the company of St. Francis, either to help people to die happily, or to restore them to health when there was no hope of life.

Under the head of 'error,' Azevedo gives the miraculous conversions of a Lutheran, a Calvinist, a Turkish lady, and an Indian prince. Under the title 'calamity,' we have several stories, which resemble to some extent the miracle by which St. Antony relieved his own father during his lifetime, of persons who were sued for debts which they had really paid, but without preserving the certificate of payment, and in whose aid miracles were wrought by the Saint. There is a very striking story of an innocent man condemned to death as a coiner of false money, in whose case the proofs of his innocence were laid before the Viceroy at Naples by a young Franciscan friar, who entered his room at a time when all entrance was strictly forbidden,

when no one saw him come and go except the Viceroy, and when no friar had been out of the monastery in the city. There is another story in which St. Francis and St. Antony appear to a persecuted and ill-treated wife who was about to put an end to herself in despair, and whose husband is reclaimed from his unfaithful life and cruel treatment of her by the threats of the same two Saints.

In the same way there are a number of beautiful anecdotes in which the devil has been bereft of his expected prey, and in which all kinds of disease—under the name of ‘lepra’—have been cured. The head ‘*Ægri surgunt sani*,’ is also abundant. St. Antony’s miracles in deliverance from dangers at sea are numerous. The story of Beatrice de Silva is among the illustrations of deliverance from prison. She was a maid of honour to Elisabeth, a princess of Portugal, who married John II. of Castile in 1441. She was extremely beautiful, and the Queen suspected her of being beloved by the King. Beatrice was imprisoned and almost starved, when she vowed to our Lady perpetual virginity, and was set free in three days. She fled to Toledo, and on the way fell in with two friars, whom she thought at first were sent to bid her prepare for death; but it turned out that one of them was St. Antony, who assured her that she was to live and become a mother to

many religious virgins. She became a Dominican nun, and, many years afterwards, was the foundress of a new congregation called after the Immaculate Conception.

When we come to the head which refers to the recovery of limbs and of things that have been lost, we enter on a vast sea without a shore, as Azevedo says. The famous Ambrosius Catharinus is one of a number of persons who have lost their manuscripts and recovered them by the intercession of the Saint. He had no sooner promised to make mention of the favour in the book which he had lost, if it were recovered by the Saint, than an unknown person came up to him and asked him if he had lost any manuscript. Under this head we find more than one amusing anecdote. A sacristan had lost a valuable thurible, and went to mention his loss to the man who had stolen it. The thief proposed that they should go together to hear a Mass in honour of St. Antony at the friars' church hard by, and pray the Saint to reveal to them the offender. While they were hearing this Mass, he took his handkerchief from his pocket, without remembering that a piece of the chain of the missing thurible was also there. The chain dropped out, and the thief's prayer was granted to his own discomfiture. Our own King Charles II. is one of the many persons

quoted as having recovered money which he had lost, through the intercession of the Saint.

But we must of necessity stop somewhere, and what has been already said may be enough to give the reader some idea of the number of miracles of St. Antony which have been recorded—only a small percentage, it may fairly be presumed, of those which have occurred. The collection has not been made, it may be observed, with a view to the canonization of the Saint, which took place so soon after his death, and it is perhaps to this that we owe the comparative picturesqueness and even the romantic character of many of the anecdotes, whereas the extreme strictness of the modern Processes of Canonization renders it necessary to select those cases only in which the supernatural character of the result is most indisputable, as, for instance, the cases of sudden cure of diseases, tumours, cancers, and the like as to which medical science is able to affirm without the least fear of mistake that no human agency can produce the effect in question. Moreover, any Catholic acquainted with the countries in which the devotion to St. Antony is most flourishing will be well aware that it is to this day fostered by frequent and wonderful interpositions of this gentle Saint on behalf of his devotees. And a visit to the place where his bones rest and to the city which

still glories in their possession and in its own connection with him, would very soon convince the most sceptical as to the continued exercise of the power which has been imparted to his prayers, and that the words which St. Bonaventure wrote six centuries ago are still true in our own time,

Narrent hi qui sentiunt, dicant Paduani.

Not, indeed, to Padua alone, but to the whole of Catholic Europe—except perhaps some countries in which the blight of heretical domination has to some extent dimmed the accidental glories of the Faith without impairing its essential hold on the hearts of the population—is the name of the great preacher of the thirteenth century a household word. It is interesting to find him a favourite saint with many of those who have had somewhat of the same work with him to perform, the missionaries and great preachers of later times. Azevedo, following the Bollandists, has a great number of miracles wrought by his intercession at the prayer of the famous Father Colnago of the Society of Jesus, and the instances of such devotion are not uncommon. St. Antony seems to stand at the head of the great band of preacher saints of the Order of St. Francis—the band of which St. Bernardine of Siena and St. John Capistrano are the most illustrious ornaments—

much as St. Francis Xavier stands at the head of the Jesuit missionaries, and St. Hyacinth and St. Vincent Ferrer at the head of those of the Order of St. Dominic. Such men belong in a particular manner, which is not shared by the other saints, to the Apostolic choir, and it is not marvellous if they share in so many ways the special gifts of the Apostles. They are given to the Church from time to time, as God sees fit to revive and exalt her after some great trial, or in order that she may achieve some new triumph. Different as are their characters, the fields of their labours, and even, as may be said, the peculiar hues of their beautiful sanctity, they are yet alike in their deep humility, their loving charity, the splendour of their gifts, the marvellous powers committed to them, the immense success of their labours, the permanence of their work, and the surpassing glory of their reward.

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